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THE NOR' EAST



# THE NOR' EAST

BY

W. S. BRUCE, D.D.

*SECOND EDITION*

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

I HAVE always been fond of homely sayings and homely folks. The highest wisdom is often to be found in humble homes. No doubt those people speak in platitudes. But their commonplace conversation deals with truths that have been confirmed by long experience of life and illuminated by great variety of incident.

To many, these homely sayings may have a trivial aspect. Certainly they are often uttered on small occasions. But the true may go along with the trivial and be none the less significant. I have found the richest wisdom among rude folks whose manners would have offended cultured tastes, but who never meant to be unmannerly. They had thought much on life and its meaning. They saw the deep contents of their workaday world. Their life had brought them many strange experiences. And they uttered their sentiments in such out-of-the-way phrases that I could not miss the opportunity of recording them in my journal. It is from its pages that the larger part of the following stories is derived.

Pascal, in his wise way, says that in his opinion the best books are those which every man feels he might himself have written, so exactly does the expression correspond with his experience. The simple sayings of country people carry with them the same proof

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of their truthfulness. They often approach to proverbial maxims. They have the salt of the Scottish mind and the flavour of the Scottish soil. I admit they are commonplaces. Many will call them platitudinarian. But all truth is trite, yet none the less true. The stories here set forth just put in fresh form what has often been thought by the multitude but never said in the same way.

Nothing is related in those pages which does not illustrate some side of character or some feature of home life. These anecdotes will not appeal in the same way to every one ; but they will probably find a quick response in the hearts of all who have known the depth of feeling which attaches to the humble hearths of the Scottish cottar and fisherman.

Of the living who are mentioned by name only such incidents are related as are to their honour, such as have obtained wide circulation, and so have become in a sense public property.

From what sources all these sayings have been gleaned it would be difficult now to tell. Friends have supplied not a few. Others were jotted down as they were met with. But they are all of Scotland, and almost all of the north-east corner thereof, where a dry wit prevails and the people speak with the Buchan accent. The cauld kail of Aberdeen and Banff has a caustic flavour. Plain living, if not high thinking, is universal. Scottish independence has not yet vanished from these counties. Nor is thrift held in disrepute in these parts. Great principles are brought to the performance of small duties. As a rule the highest truths of religion influence the people, maintaining the sanctity of their home and administering the smallest frugalities of conscience.

This book contains stories entirely and only of Scottish people. They refer to the present and to

## INTRODUCTION

the past, the more recent past. There is no land in which the past is more of a living fact than it is in Scotland. This little country, like Greece and Switzerland, has a genius of its own, and it is greatly to be desired that the manners and customs and habits, which went so much to the making of the men of the past, should be understood by each succeeding generation. Scotland has ever been a country of ideals, and these have counted for more than self-aggrandisement or self-preservation. They have been ideals of freedom, of patriotism, and of nationality, for which causes men have given their lives and spilt their blood like water.

In trying to understand these, we seek to know how the people thought and spoke. Their mind comes out in their maxims; their proverbs are just their way of expressing themselves. It is in the language of the home and the fireside and the playground that we get at the heart of any race. To know the Scot we must know his native tongue, his accent, and his mannerisms. He has his own gift of wit and humour; but we must know his dialect in order to catch the gleam of his humour. We must study him at his work and at his play to discover the edge of his wit. There are a point and a piquancy in it which are lost when it is translated from Scotch into English; and in the following stories the flavour is found in some Scottish phrase. The pathos of the pictures presented is lessened or lost when the words are anglicised.

On the much-discussed distinction between humour and wit we need not here enter. John Locke says that wit discovers unexpected similarities in dissimilar things or ideas, whereas humour has a gleam of imagination and an element of sympathy which enrich it with a peculiar glow that is not inherent

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in the words. On the other hand, Dean Ramsay affirms that these metaphysical distinctions do not help him to distinguish humour from wit, and he is doubtful whether any real difference lies behind them.

There certainly is a very pawky humour quite characteristic of the Scot. If it does not sparkle, it at any rate excites much laughter by its play, and must be akin to wit.

But how any one can maintain that the Scotland that produced, among many others, a John Galt, a Walter Scott, a Robert Burns, a John Clerk, and a Dr. John Brown, is without a sense of humour, entirely passes our comprehension. Tobias Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker* is marked throughout by brightest humour no less than by flashes of wit. And Mr. Barrie has won success more by character than by plot—character drawn with overflowing humour and deep pathos.

The native Scot is not the dull, dour, canny, and cautious person that he is generally represented to be. This collection of stories will afford abundant evidence of the statement. On the other hand, I hold that he is consciously, and still more often unconsciously, humorous. He has quite a gift of uttering odd conceits that glisten with that light which plays around every subject, like lambs about the ewes, and coruscates like the *aurora borealis* across every sky which it illumines. It is well called the saving gift of humour. By means of it a way of escape from many an awkward situation has been found. The most difficult and painful duty may be safely performed by the man who gilds the pill with it. The *perseveridum ingenium Scotorum* without it would be a constant danger. Where the Celt has not got ti, he is ever in hot water. Fortunately it

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is not a rare gift in Scotland. I find it among farmers and fishermen, among rich and among poor.

Fishermen are generally supposed to have no share in it. I can only say that the one man in my parish, who all his life simply bubbled over with humour, was born and bred a fisherman; and he left five sons in the same calling, several of whom inherit in some degree their father's gift. When in January 1854 the mails all over the north of Scotland were delayed for more than a fortnight by a severe snowstorm, and not a letter or newspaper from Edinburgh or London reached Banff all the time, the humour of the situation struck John. To a young man from London who was in Banff the following spring, and who said, "What did you do all the time for news? You would not know what London was doing," he replied, with his happy smile, "Troth, that's a fac'; but ye wad juist be as far back as oorsels, for you Lunnan folks wad hae nae news o' Banff!"

The caution of the Scot is proverbial; but even in this caution humour may be found lurking. Every one will recognise a *soupçon* of that quality in the reply of the redoubtable Hawkie, who on the night of a parliamentary election was asked to which side he leaned. "I'm neither Whig nor Tory; I like the middle courses. Gang ayont that, either up or doon, it doesna maitter a button, it's a' wrack an' ruination. Baith sides are playin' their game, but I sit on ma ain horse and keep a leg on ilka side o' him." A farmer, of a slow tongue and placid temperament, went up from the north of Scotland for the first time to see London. He stayed only four days, and on his return a clever young schoolmaster sought to make fun of him by asking whether he had been invited to Buckingham Palace and met the King. His reply, in the drawl of the rustic, was not without

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its caustic humour: "Oh ay, I met King George, gude man, and very polite he was; he said he meant to speir me to supper, but it was ironin' day wi' the Queen, an' he wad hae to pit the bairnies tae bed himsel'. Sae I didna trouble him." .

Many of the following anecdotes will illustrate the fondness of the north-east people for proverbs. For these maxims of wisdom they have a great respect. Archbishop Trench says that "proverbs have been always dear to the true intellectual aristocracy of a nation," and that Aristotle made a collection of them. Shakespeare used them for titles to several of his plays. Cervantes could scarcely open his mouth but there dropped from it almost as many proverbs as sentences.

It is very pleasant to think that the Banffshire and Aberdeenshire crofter and fisherman can be so classified. He certainly holds the proverb in high honour, and is ever ready to set his seal to the conclusions of wiser men who have preceded him. Even his theology and ethics run on these lines, and there can be no doubt that they have helped him to shape his conduct and to build up his Scottish character. His knowledge of the Bible first of all gave him access to the Proverbs of Solomon as well as to the rich treasures of wisdom in the New Testament which have come from a greater than Solomon. But indeed the north-east of Scotland is pervaded with this kind of happy wisdom, and to it a universal regard is paid.

The inculcation by parents and schoolmasters of this proverbial literature and its use in the common speech of the people has helped to produce the Scottish character and to impress upon it the features which everywhere mark it. These may be said to be caution, prudence, a certain steadiness or fixity

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of purpose, and thrift. They are all connected and interrelated. Thrift includes foresight regarding all life's duties and dangers; it demands continuity of action, persistence of purpose, steadiness in work, a large amount of self-denial, and a spirit of preparedness to undergo hardships. The thrifty man, like Moses, 'endures.' That soldierly quality enters into the Scot and puts iron into his moral constitution. Very rarely, if ever, have I found a thrifty person indolent, 'feckless,' or unreliable. On the other hand, there are almost always to be found in such people a resoluteness, a will-power, and a diligence that go to the creating of the independence which the national poet so justly praises:

"Not for to hide it in a hedge,  
Nor for a train attendant,  
But for the glorious privilege  
Of being independent."

I believe thrift lies beneath and behind that fine independence both of human opinion and of State help which has ever been the mark of the sons of Scotia: Men of to-day like Lord Strathcona,<sup>1</sup> Andrew Carnegie, Lord Mountstephen, and Sir Andrew Fraser are living examples of it. They breathed that atmosphere in their boyhood; they took it into their blood with the bracing air of the hills. Their resoluteness and independence exempted them from much interference and obstructive annoyance, since people fight shy of this type of character. The space clears around such men and leaves them room to act with freedom. The man who has learned to live in the spirit of independent thriftiness can never be soft pliable. He will have grit. And if he only gets

<sup>1</sup> This nobleman, an honour to Scotland, has died since the above was written.



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grace with grit he will be sure to be a man of strong influence and of lofty example.

Yet to-day many influences are working against our national virtue. It is not so popular in the twentieth century as it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth. As Dr. John Watson (Ian Maclaren) once said: "Justice is seldom done to the thrifty, and a great deal more than justice is done to the thriftless. A certain glamour seems to surround the man who takes no thought for the morrow in another sense than Jesus intended, and who flings his money right and left in every form of social extravagance." Yet this latter is one who seldom helps the great cause of philanthropy or of religion. Not infrequently, after a certain period, we find him inclined more to borrow than to give. He has had no forethought, and the money flung away in pseudo-generosity comes to an end. When he dies, as a rule no provision is found to have been made for his wife or children or near relatives. The great charities of the land do not get his help. He has spent on his own tastes and whims and luxuries the means that, in a truly liberal man, should have gone for the support of others.

We ought to give to wise economy its true place among the Christian virtues. To-day the thrifty man does not get his due. But he is the backbone of the nation. It was found in the Franco-Prussian War that France would have been bankrupt but for its thrifty small farmers. The economical cottars and labourers of Scotland have been in like manner the making of the Scottish race. They live frugally, work hard, dress plainly, and are content to furnish their homes in an inexpensive way. Luxuries are shunned and only necessities are attended to. Yet the cottar will give his children the best education

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he can. He will stint and almost starve himself to fit them to enter a secondary school or the gate of a university.

It is to thrifty people that Aberdeenshire and Banffshire owe their front-rank place in secondary education. They have aided the School Boards and County Councils by their eager support of their children at secondary schools, where the small bursary won did not pay one-half of the expenses. These scholars, coming out of such homes, have literally "cultivated literature on a little oatmeal." Porridge and the Book of Proverbs have been the making of them. They have learned to endure hardship, to work steadily, and to climb the ladder of learning on the least possible amount of outside help, and with a sturdy independence that has been altogether admirable. It is to be hoped that our people will never quit these simple and wholesome ways. Certain it is that the thriftless nation is on the sure road to moral bankruptcy and decadence of character. While, on the other hand, a thrifty population, out of its frugalities and self-denials, will build up a character of strength and solidity, fortified by endurance and every manly virtue.

These traits, however, are so characteristic of the folk of the north-east of Scotland that they are deserving of separate treatment, and will be dealt with in a chapter by themselves.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SCOTTISH NOR' EAST

**THE** Nor' East contains some of the finest types of the true Scot. They smell of their soil ; the smoke of the peat is about them. A very large part of the national drink is brewed in Banffshire. The two counties of Banff and Aberdeen contain a fair proportion of the old-fashioned people, among whom popular traditions linger long and the customs of the forefathers are conserved and continued ; while in Buchan the purest Doric is still spoken, and every parish possesses its Braeside and its Drumsheugh.

The people are somewhat shy and reticent. When you meet them the speech at first is of the weather. They hide themselves, as every real man does, in their ordinary intercourse. It is only in confidential moments that they drop the mask and show their soul. And it is he who can catch the psychological moment that will get the flavour of the native wine and the humour of the native point of view.

The said point of view may be that of the fisher, or the farmer, or the crofter. The first of these has a very distinct and settled place of his own around the north-east corner. He is an asset of large monetary value to-day. And he knows his worth. When Professor Cossar Ewart came to this quarter to lecture on the habits of herring, the Banffshire fisher thought the thing superfluous. A big fellow at the first lecture,

with his lips perhaps loosened with a drop of drink, rose and walked out, exclaiming, "Wha sent ye here to tell hus aboot herrin'?"

And the cottar too has his point of view. He is the backbone of the counties and of the kirks. The following talk with one of my crofters, at the time of Mr. Chamberlain's famous proposals, will set it forth: "It's nae joke, sir, to be a crafter nooadays. Ye canna wirk a craft wi' yer feet on the fender, I asseer ye. It tak's a' yer time and yer tent to mak' ends meet." "But are not three acres and a cow," I asked, "the ideal of a crofter's life?" "Oh ay, ye like yer joke, I see. But Chaumerlain didna ken muckle aboot crafts when he gaed that gate. Ae awcre and three coos, or three awcres and ae coo, it wad be a' the same to him. He kent mony things, but nae muckle aboot Scotch crafts. In fac', naeboddy kens aboot crafts but a crafter. Ye need to be a' yir days on a craft to ken its possibeelities. Ilka bit field hes its ain wye o' growin' girss. There's a hantle o' learnin', sir, to be got frae a craft."

In both cases the natural Conservatism of the Nor' East is remarkable. Its very Liberalism is conservative. It stands by it as its fathers stood. The Nor' East is very slow to change. Trawling came to Fife and Forfar, but it never was accepted in the Moray Firth. Even the steam-drifter took many a day to win the hearts of the Banffshire fishermen from the old scaffie and the zulu boat. Slowly among the farmers the new and useful binder is superseding the older customs. Forty years ago I can remember the hook and the scythe on all the crofts. And the conservative point of view is still there. "Hairvest wark nooadays is naething ava," said a crofter's wife to me. "It's juist oot wi' yir binder and in wi' yir corn. When I began to gither

as a lassie, I wis juist fourteen; and afore we got to the en' o' the first day I was greetin' wi' the sair wark, and juist creepit hame to ma bed. But noo a man sits like a gentleman on a fine seat and drives the horses, and the machine cuts and bin's a' at ance, and there's naethin' but stookin' and stackin'. There'll sune be nae eese o' fowks at a'. It'll juist be beasts and binders."

Yet along with its conservative ways there is also a spirit of progress. The old zulu boat is rapidly giving place to the steam-drifter. The light railway is penetrating into the heart of Buchan and will more and more do so. Motor railway buses are connecting distant villages with stations where express trains stop. So far as mechanical contrivances are concerned, the whole Nor' East is being brought into closest touch with the busy world of traffic and is being opened up to tourists and holiday-seekers.

Nor is the progress confined to the side of commerce and agriculture alone. The north-east of Scotland has always had a distinguished pre-eminence in education. Its schools and schoolmasters have been the envy of all Scotland. When the north and north-west were far behind in education in the beginning of last century, Banffshire and Aberdeenshire went to the front and have ever since maintained their priority. The Dick and Milne Bequests, by means of their handsome endowments in aid of teaching, enabled the parishes of these counties to secure Masters of Arts for the training of their young. The result has been that these parishes have sent up far more than the usual quota of pupils to the University of Aberdeen and to other seats of learning. The standard of education in the north-east was raised to a very high level of excellence, which has ever since been maintained. School Boards and

ounty Councils have heartily co-operated in keeping their schools well staffed and in securing that in them the highest progress shall be made in every branch of Science not less than in languages. I think it was Sir Henry Craik who said that Scotland was the best educated country in the world, and that these two counties were the best educated counties in Scotland.

I had the honour and privilege of knowing some of the foremost of the old parochial schoolmasters who made themselves a name for the young men whom they sent out into the great world of letters and of learning. One was Mr. James Grant, schoolmaster of the parish of Banff when I came to the parish as minister. Students flocked to him at Hilton School from nearly every parish in Banffshire. That remote schoolhouse was a centre of light and leading. From ten up to fifteen boys attended daily, a few of them boarding with the master, and all studying with a view of going up to the bursary competition at Aberdeen. The school had only one sideroom in which Mr. Grant could teach them apart from the other scholars. But, both before the school met and after it closed, he would labour with those boys at Classics and English, sparing no toil and grudging no time if only he could create in them the love of learning, and help them to make progress in Science and languages. There was no corporal punishment, no hard drill. The love of learning was supreme. If the boy did not care for it, he was urged to go home and take to farming or to trade. But if he desired to win the prize of culture every possible encouragement was given to him at the least expense. There are throughout the world to-day doctors, lawyers, ministers, professors, and statesmen who got their inspiration and their love of literature first of all

in the humble classroom of James Grant. Latterly, he went to Keith, and in that larger centre his pupils grew in number and his fame widened, until he became the doyen of the schoolmasters of Banffshire, and his Alma Mater fittingly crowned his career with the degree of LL.D.

Another of the old 'Parochials' was Mr. John Minto of Clatt, whose nephew was the well-known Professor Minto of Aberdeen. Clatt School was another busy hive of learning. I am told that the fees were seldom more than five shillings a quarter, for which modest sum instruction of the rarest kind was given in Latin, Greek, English, Mathematics, Botany, and Zoology. Many a humble cottar's son, as well as boys and girls from the manse round about, sat at the feet of John Minto, and got inspiration from his lips. I once spent half a day with the grand old man and his sister, both of whom were thoroughly of the old-fashioned type of character; and I was greatly impressed by the evident enthusiasm of their scholars, and their intense love for their master.

Contemporary with him was Mr. John Wilson, schoolmaster of Auchindoir, and latterly Rector of Banff Academy. His school was another hive of busy bees, storing up wisdom and literature in that remote parish on the banks of the Bogie. Perhaps his best known pupil is Sir William Robertson-Nicoll, LL.D., of London. Among his other pupils have been doctors, ministers, professors, and generals of the British Army, who have made for themselves name and fame in the wide world. The late General Sir Alexander J. F. Reid, K.C.B., spoke to me of him in terms of extraordinary admiration, affirming that he owed more to Dr. Wilson than to any of the professors under whom he studied at the University. Dr. Wilson still lives in retirement, cultivating corre-

spondence and maintaining friendship with his many pupils far and near.

I must not fail to mention another who was probably not superior to any of these in teaching ability, but who exercised over many others, as well as myself, a wonderful influence. That was Rev. W. P. Smith, Free Church minister of Keig, previously a school-master on Deeside, and then headmaster of a high-class school in Aberdeen. In his later years he chose the ministry, and removed to Keig, where most of his children, including the famous Professor W. Robertson Smith, were educated. He was a born teacher, and his fine scholarship and great ability enabled him to elucidate every difficulty. He kept boarders at Keig, whom he taught in his study along with his own boys and girls. I had the privilege of being a visitor at Keig Manse two successive summers, having first made the acquaintance and the friendship of Mr. Smith's sons in Stonehaven. As the boys worked each day in summer, I gladly worked with them in preparation for my College course. They were two years ahead of me, and were engaged in much higher studies. Some seven or eight of us met in the study every morning, the father assisting each boy or girl in turn, stimulating, cheering, and suggesting. The younger of us he introduced to the beauties of Virgil and the grandeur of the Homeric poetry, while in daily walks at noon he would open up to us in conversation the meaning of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, then newly published, and descant upon the wonderful way in which Tennyson could associate pictorial effects with musical expression and fine rhythm. I can never forget the dear old gentleman's glowing face and glistening eye as he compared lines of the *Odyssey* with certain lines of Tennyson. Sometimes he would give us frag-



ments of the Poet Laureate in the grand style, such as *Cenone*, or *The Palace of Art*, or choice passages from Shakespeare, which he would often compare with the far-resounding lines of the *Iliad*, or with the onomatopoetic lines of the *Æneid* of Virgil. This would be varied in other walks with delightful talks on Botany and Geology. We learned Modern Science almost without knowing it, so pleasantly were we made to handle fossils, and to learn the various kinds of rock that cropped up in different parts of Benachie and in the valley of the Don.

In that manse the diet was plain, yet the whole atmosphere was one of the highest culture. There was no compulsion ; love was lord of all in that happy household. Every penny that could be spared was spent on new books, and in paying for the carriage of a monthly box of volumes from the University library. Economy ruled the hom ; the annual income was not above £150. We boys chopped the wood, cleaned the byre, helped the minister in the garden and on the glebe ; and all the time we listened to his inspiring talk and his wise sayings. Plain living, good exercise, hard study, and lofty conversation all went together. In that manse the best society in Aberdeenshire frequently met. Its members were in correspondence with many of the leading professors in Aberdeen. All the most recent literature came thither. They thought with Plato, talked with Cicero, read French and German as well as ancient Classics, and continually discussed the most recent advances in Modern Science as well as the deepest problems of Theology. The fare was that of a farmer's house, but the intellectual diet was of the richest and rarest kind. Was it wonderful that all of us fell in love with learning ? How much of culture may be enjoyed with plain living ! When

his son had become famous, and he a D.D., Dr. Smith to the end of his life remained a teacher and inspirer of youth. I confess I never met his equal in that respect.

These schoolmasters were generally quiet, thoughtful men. I came to know one in a remote parish who had lived a very strenuous life and done much good work, in educating the young in the highest principles of character not less than in Classics and Mathematics. But he was of a highly strung temperament, and his children had nearly all gone before. A sage remark which he made to me on his death-bed I can never forget. "I have," he said, "a most extreme dislike to packing my portmanteau when I leave home for another place, a dislike which grows stronger with age. I get nervous and unhappy, and feel as if I were starting on my last long journey. It abides with me till I get into the train, but after half an hour of travel it vanishes. By the time I have arrived at my destination it is gone and transformed into an emotion of pleasure in the changed circumstances and new company. Now may it not be so at the last journey? A nervous dread will possess me; then will come the sudden departure, the journey through the short tunnel of darkness, and then—Home! with all old friends as new friends, in better surroundings and purer atmosphere. The thought has given me much comfort. Do you not think it's a prophecy?" I think it is.

The same teacher had conceived a strange liking for the writings of Spinoza, which he read in the Latin in which they were composed. He thought Spinoza suited the needs of to-day because he had developed such a magnificent conception of nature as being full of the presence of Deity; and because he had fashioned it so that all physical things are not only accompanied

by thought, but are grounded in and supported by an all-comprehending divine energy. He seemed to find his highest delight in this (as he called it) Christian Pantheism. He affirmed it gave him the right meaning of the fifteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, and made him feel that nature must finally be absorbed in the spiritual world. This coloured all his hopes and conceptions of the future. A talk with the good man was most elevating. On his death-bed the superiority of his spirit to the pangs of dissolution was a most convincing demonstration of the power of the spiritual over the physical and the material.

The old 'Parochial' is gone, never more to return. New men and new methods have taken his place. New schools are built with every appurtenance that health demands and the teaching of Science requires. Compared to these the poorly equipped old parish school looks mean indeed. There the Presbytery paid their annual visit and said a few kind words and distributed prizes. Now the Government Inspector pries into everything; the School Board meets and criticises results; and the Iron Hand of the Department in London is upon all. Yet teachers are still working for the high ends of learning. Students are flocking to universities in large numbers. Every one may follow the line of his aptitudes to-day, and be the man his Maker intended he should be. But the old 'Parochial' is not forgotten. He did splendid work on a small income, with little help and with few encouragements. He might be severe in his discipline, but learning he loved, and his purse was always open to help the persevering and the clever boy.

"And if severe in aught

The love he bore to learning was in fault."

For him many of us still have a great respect. His

Portrait has been depicted with a very loving hand in the Domsie of Ian Maclaren. We had many Domsies in the nineteenth century throughout the Nor' East, and they left their imperishable record in many hearts and memories.

Not a few stories are told of them, but I have room only for two. The first is of Strathdon, where the schoolmaster was a rare combination of enthusiasm in learning and of patient kindness. A violent hunderstorm had suddenly swept over the valley of the Don, and the pupils were both frightened by the vivid lightning and timorous as to the possibilities of getting home. "Noo, ma dear bairns," said the master, "ye'll juist pit a' yer trust in Providence till get time to see hoo ye're a' to get hame dry."

At a school examination by the Presbytery the class was being examined in the knowledge of the Book of Genesis. The examiner asked one little fellow the opening question, which he thought a simple one, "Of what did God make the earth?" "Oot o' naething," was the answer. And in order to evoke what might be in the juvenile mind he further asked, "And have you ever seen nothing?" "Oh yes," replied the youngster, with a bright face. "Indeed!" said the astonished examiner; "and where have you seen nothing?" "On the sklate," was the triumphant reply. The clerical examiner poke of the stupidity of the scholar. The schoolmaster, on the other hand, maintained it was a flash of genius, and that the pupil was sure to become an adept in solving mathematical problems, having a much clearer conception than his examiner of the idea of infinity. The dispute between the Dominie and the Reverend Doctor was continued at the hospitable manse dinner-table, where it gave rise to infinite amusement and diversion. The schoolmaster

read German, and he affirmed that Goethe was upon his side, who said that the very purpose for which men were made was to stamp the perishable with an imperishable worth, and that this was what was in the pupil's mind when the boy thought of the creation of the world out of nothing. It was said to have led to many sermons and to much searching of heart among the Presbytery.

Banffshire has also the honour of giving birth to one of the great astronomers of the eighteenth century. James Fergusson was a self-taught man, born in Rothiemay, 1710 ; for a time he kept sheep, and would lie down on the hillside at night and map the heavenly constellations with a stretched thread and beads strung upon it. His book on Astronomy used to be on the shelves of many a Banffshire farmer. It helped to promote that knowledge of the nocturnal heavens which I found more common in this county forty years ago than it is to-day. One farmer who talked much of the stars used to say they made him sad, yet he would spend whole evenings in observing the planets, and in November would sit up half the night to watch and count the meteors that then commonly appear. Their saddening effect upon his mind reminded me of the remark of Carlyle to a gentleman who, walking with him, appealed to him to note the splendour of the canopy above their heads. "Hech ! it is a 'sad sight,'" said the Chelsea sage.

In the days of herding, the herd boys used to take their time by the sun and stars, and seldom erred. They would rise in the morning and come home at evening by their daily guides. Watches were then the property only of wealthy farmers. Sometimes the lack of correct astronomical knowledge was an excuse for lateness or negligence. "Rise, Geordie,"

cried a crofter to his herd boy in the 'chaumer,' "the sun's up lang syne; rise, man." Geordie rubbed his eyes and sulkily remonstrated, "It's time till 'im; he wasna up a' yisterday when I wes at ma wark."

But if the Nor' East has its schoolmasters and scholars, it has also its own accent. And when Englishmen visit us our Scottish dialect is responsible for not a few misunderstandings that will arise in the course of conversation. One occurred some time ago between a shooting tenant and a farmer in this neighbourhood. They were discussing the prospects of the coming pheasant shooting when the Englishman said, "We are fond of all sorts of game, and find Banffshire a splendid place for the grouse; but my wife misses a good garden and especially a good grapehouse." The farmer begged the gentleman's pardon and asked his meaning. "I mean," said he, "you don't seem to have grapes in Scotland." "Dear me, sir," said the farmer, "I've half a dizzen gweed graips in ma toolhoose: if ye want ane o' them ye're welcome. We pit oot oor dung and dig oor tatties wi' graips." Explanations had to be given and the word 'fork' substituted.

Another instance of such misunderstanding sprang out of the word 'fowl,' which in the north is pronounced the same as 'fool.' To an English vicar, serving in summer a Scottish Episcopal Church in Morayshire, a kindly farmer said, after the morning service, "My wife wad like to send you the morn twa fools for the pot, and howps ye'll enjoy them." His astonishment was not small when the vicar, in a somewhat stiff manner, said, "We have, I think, enough of them already, and want no more." "Oh," said the farmer, "I oonerstan' ye: ye mean fules, but I mean fools. Ye maunna be contrairy." Of

course the clergyman apologised and thankfully accepted the gift, not forgetting for the future the double *entendre*.

Not unlike this was the incident connected with the Porteous mob trial, when, at the bar of the House of Lords, the Provost of Edinburgh was examined by the Duke of Newcastle, then in the Cabinet, and was asked what kind of shot the soldiers under Captain Porteous made use of against the crowds. His answer, now famous, was one not relished by His Grace: "Juist what we use tae shoot deukes an' fools wi' " (wild duck and wild fowl).

The north-east accent compels me to speak of some north-east editors who have left us various delightful reminiscences of its men and its manners. Among these William Alexander, editor of the *Aberdeen Free Press*, was *facile princeps*. His *Johnnie Gibb of Gushetneuk* will remain the Classic of the Nor' East. Owing to the spelling and the speech it may appeal to a limited number of readers; but over those who understand it it exercises a continual spell. In the purity of its Scotch it is equalled only by the *Hamewith* of Charles Murray, who, on the veldt of South Africa, has not forgotten the tones and the temper of the people of the Vale of Alford.

But as a genuine representative of the Nor' East, both in character and manner, the late Mr. David Scott, a Peterhead editor, was supreme. He was held in the highest esteem throughout Buchan, where his wit and his pawky manner were familiar. Reminiscences of him have been published by the present editor of the same newspaper, of which the following are specimens: "For my part," said Mr. Scott, "I ran a paper for thirty-odd year, an' durin' that time we encountered some very oreejinal poetry !

It mostly took an *In Memoriam* form. I remember once that a young man died some fifty-odd miles off this coast as his ship was returnin' from the Arctic regions. Bein' so near port, the remains, instead o' bein' consigned to a watery grave, were brought home for interment on land; and, as is the custom, the body lay covered wi' the British flag. The young man's mother lived at the neighbourin' fishin' village o' Boddam, and she drove across to the port to view the remains on board ship. The unusual circumstances seemed to impress the bard, and the followin' verse was sent for insertion in the next eeshoo o' the *Eastport Standard*:—

'They brought him from the Arctic seas,  
He in a flag was furled;  
The mother to see her only son,  
She in a cab was hurled.'

Here is another story admirably told by Mr. Scott: "My dear good old mother bocht a remmender fae Johnnie Hitcheon; and took it an' me tae Saunders to be mizhur't. She explain't that she wantit a jaicket suit tae the laddie. Saunders lookit at me, an' lookit at the claith dootfully, an' said he wad try; an' the 'try' wid mean, like, that he wid try tae mak' the suit an' get a bittie cubbitch tee. Bit Aw'm thinkin' he hidna seen muckle cubbitch in that lottie.

"The claes was made an' sent hame; bit there was something terrable missin'. Ma mither pit tham a' back in the paper again, an' aff she sets tae Saunders. I gaed wi' her tae hear the sport. When we got to the shop she lowsers the string wi' trimlin' fingers, an' folds oot the parcel. Syne she lays oot the things wan by wan.

"'Saunders,' says she, 'there's the jacket, an'



there's the weskit, an' there's the breekees. Bit, Saunders, man, faur's mi clippin's ?'

" ' Clippin's, wumman ? ' said Saunders. ' Clippin's, did ye say ? Wumman, the suit itsel' was made oot o' a clippin' ! ' "

There has always been a friendly rivalry between Peterhead (in these notes called Eastport) and its nearest northern neighbour, Fraserburgh, and Mr. Scott could on occasion describe the feeling in a playful way : " During the great days of the whaling industry, when Eastport was sending out some thirty odd whalers a year to the Arctic, the Broch was sorely put to it to keep its end up. But the Brochers showed considerable ingenuity. One of the local sheets would announce that ' The half of our whaling fleet sailed yesterday—the other half will leave to-morrow. ' " When it is explained, as David used to delight in doing, that Fraserburgh had only two small vessels engaged in the whaling, it will be seen that these townspeople did not willingly spoil a story in the telling. " One day," David said, in his intense way, " I met young Smith in the market at Maud, an' he was reeslin' a moneybag. Says I, ' Faur are ye gaun the day ? ' ' Oh,' says he, ' Aw'm goin' up ti Rora ti pay the staff at the quarry.' I've been inquiren' aboot this staff," continued David, " an' I've fun' oot that it consists o' half a man an' a laddie—an aul' mannie wi' a wudden leg and a loon ! 'An' he was gaun ti pay 'the staff' ! It takes a Brocher ti dee a thing like that ! "

One other editor I must mention, Alexander Ramsay, Esq., LL.D., of the *Banffshire Journal*. Dr. Ramsay did more than any other man in the Nor' East to promote good friendship, to put down ill-will, and to abolish in politics the spirit of partisanship. He made use of his newspaper to preserve

local traditions, and to maintain all Scottish customs which were in keeping with the genius of the people, and tended to the consolidation of their character. He frequently proved a most excellent medium between landlords and tenants. He knew, as very few did, the trials and ways of the farmer; and he was greatly helpful in establishing the *Polled Herd Book*, and in encouraging farmers to pay their rents less by corn and more and more by the breeding of polled cattle. To no small extent it was due to him that the native black cattle of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire were bred so largely in these counties, and came to supply the London market with the beef which is known as 'Prime Scots.' He was one of Nature's truest gentlemen: the friend of all and the enemy of none.

## CHAPTER III

### THE HUMOURS OF RECRUITING IN THE NOR' EAST

WHEN the war of 1914 broke out, it changed the whole aspect of the Nor' East. The prosperous herring fishing of summer collapsed. The fishermen returned with their boats and drifters to their native villages. The English fishing of October at Yarmouth became an impossibility. Life became lonesome in the Moray Firth.

It is true the farmers did not suffer with the fishermen. Their interests are often diverse, which explains to some extent why they so often differ. The farmers had gathered in their crops with a subdued gladness. The abundant sunshine had given abundance of potatoes, and as one said, "When folks hae taties, they winna stairve." The corn and straw were abundant. Prices rapidly rose. One who remembered Sebastopol said, "There's naethin' for fairmers like a gweed war: it aye keps up the corn."

But when in November orders came from the Admiralty that, owing to the presence of German submarines in the North Sea, all lamps were to be extinguished after sunset and windows to be carefully blinded in all coast towns and villages, there fell on the land a "darkness like that of Egypt which might be felt." Concerts stopped, or were held only in aid of the Belgian refugees. Women took to knitting

and woollen jackets for the soldiers in the regiments. Contingent after contingent of recruits went off to training camps. Lassies remained behind, mirth was gone. The Nor' East went into mourning.

The grief deepened when casualty lists came to be published. Then the war came home to us all as family after family were clothed in black. The song most frequently heard was "The Flowers o' the Forest." It was sung in the old version at the armhouses.

"I've heard a liltin' at oor ewe milkin',

Lasses a-liltin' before the brak' o' day.

But noo there is moanin' in ilka green loanin',

The Flooers o' the Forest are a' wede away."

Taxation grew heavier, food prices increased, unemployment spread, and every one went back to old-fashioned ways. Dear old Thrift again came into vogue. The people resumed their plate of porridge and their kail. Long may the habit remain now in the Nor' East.

Yet amid all this gloom there were flashes of brightness. Sallies of Scottish wit would come out. It was mainly in connection with recruiting that these mirthful explosions occurred. The Nor' East determined to do its duty in furnishing Lord Kitchener with "yet another hundred thousand men." The recruiting sergeants, captains, and colonels accordingly went out with their motor-cars and horse vehicles. They addressed meetings in churches, halls, and schools. They went to kirk and market. They visited farmers and cottars; they pleaded with fishermen and sailors. They worked through women, wives, and sweethearts. In the absence of better accommodation they despised neither a roadside nor

a straw barn. Once a henhouse was utilised during a shower to secure the wife's consent to the husband's going.

It was impossible that all this pleading, this collision of mind with mind, this clashing of interest, should occur without some humorous and "funny incidents happening. More than once the saving gift of humour relieved the tension of a meeting and prevented it from breaking down in very melancholy. Not a few speeches were lighted up with iridescent flashes of real wit which "sent the feathered arrow home."

Indeed, these were the bright bits of a dull time, and lighted up the dreariness of many a secluded village and lonesome farm kitchen. One told of a kind-hearted but somewhat soft cattleman, known as Second Peter (another of the same name having preceded him at Bruntbrae), who said, when asked, "Are you going to join us, Peter, and shoulder a rifle?" replied, "Na! I'm nae gaun tae lave ma place." "Why, may I ask?" peremptorily said the Captain, a gentleman farmer of the next parish. "I'm to bide wi' the kye," said Peter the Second. "Hoots, man, the kye can do without ye." "Ay, mebbe they can," said he, "but I canna dae without the kye." Peter the Second proved an impossible.

The recruiters have been many. Dukes and sheriffs, lairds and laymen, ministers and elders, wives and daughters, all have been used and all have been needed. One of the best was a schoolmaster, who went after all his old pupils whom he remembered as fighting boys on the playground, and managed to send them all to the front. He told how he had witnessed a fight in the public road, while two horse-coupers looked on admiringly. One boy, the less of the two, stood up to it bravely. "He's a bonnie fechter, that wee billy," said the one couper. "We

"gaun get 'im for the sojers." "Ay, Jock," said the other, "ye're richt there, thae Germans craw ower good upo' their midden-heid; but sa'na! that chap had sune cut their kaimis."

A minister in Buckie, an able pleader, was the first who made a really deep impression upon the fishermen of the Moray Firth by his speech, a speech which, for its frank statement of plain and personal truths, could not be excelled. It sent many young fishers to the mine-sweeping. But others felt sore and aggrieved. The critics along the Firth were not few. Two fishermen in Banff were talking of it. "That Buckie man was gey sair upon the fishers. Peter, wasna he? Fat kens he aboot fushin'?" "Or aboot the war, aither?" said Peter. "He hasna a wife or bairnies; he shudna speak to huz." "That's it, John, we've wives to think o'; an' I juist said to my kimmer, whan she speirt if I was gaun tae the war, 'Na, womman, I'm nae gaun awa' to France tae fecht; plenty o' fechtin' tae be dune at hame!'"

It is not many working men in Banffshire who can perpetrate a good pun. But one did appear the other day, and it came from the shambles, of all unexpected places! A recruiting major went to an inland country town where a butcher is accustomed weekly to send up sides and forelegs to a London salesman. The assistant, who did the killing every Monday, was a strapping, stout fellow, and attracted the Major's eye at once, and was without any difficulty enlisted. He was quite proud of his new position and easily stood the jokers. "Ye're a gran' hand at killin' nowt, Jock. We'll sune hear o' ye killin' scores o' Germans!" However, when he went up, the head of the Army Service Corps secured him for his own work at the port of Havre, and he was told to go there. This pleased Jock immensely,

and he went round his Banffshire friends at Aldershot relating the news with much gusto. "An' arena ye comin' to the trenches, Jock? I thocht yu warnna wantin' in pluck?" "Nae want o' pluck," said Jock, "but they ken I kill nowt weel, an' they're tae keep me for that wark at a place they ca' Havre. But I'se warrant ye, if I get a glint o' a German at Havre, I'll lat 'im fin' the wecht o' my aixe, an' we'll sune *halfre* 'im!"

The foregoing reminds one of a story connected with Waterloo. A Highland soldier approached a prostrate Frenchman who, being already severely wounded, cried out with a French accent for mercy and quarter. "Quarter ye?" said I Donald; "I hinna time tae dae mair than hack aff yer heid!" And with a stroke of the sword he finished the Frenchman.

Many a home's happiness has been disturbed by the recruiting captain, where wife and husband could not see eye to eye on the subject of patriotism. Sometimes the wife was the more loyal of the two and would quietly inspire the goodman, who at first did not, with his more obtuse sentiments, hear the call of the country. One man told how his wife really "sent him to the sojourners," not with any scornful scolding, but by gently saying in a loving tone "Donal', I aye liket ye, but I wud like awfu' wee to see ye in the khaki an' kilt!" Donald went. But the converse was also not infrequent. One husband was very keen to go, a brawny young blacksmith from Donside, but his wife and her mother urged Andrew to 'ca' canny,' a fellow he was kept back for some time. "Be cowpuknd he was kept back for some time. The wife's persuasion, gudeman, be cowshus," was a perpetual cry. But after a second call billy Donside, Andrew could stand it r

more. "Cowshus, woman?" he shouted. "Amn't I cowshus? Ay, ower cowshus! It's coorage an' nae cowshun we're needin'. Dinna ye mind the minister's text yon day—'Be strong an' o' a gude coorage'? Gust yer gab wi' that text, gudewife, till I come hame." She did it, and Andrew got away in peace and is now in khaki.

From the Vale of Alford there comes a recruiting story connected with the Sunday kirkyard crack. A local major of the Territorials thought it was the best opportunity he could find for advancing the interests of the army. For several successive Sundays he was very early at church, and the kirkyard saw him in every part of it for a good half-hour preceding the service. His persistency became notorious, and by the fourth Sunday he was avoided. Still he persisted, and addressing an old crofter, urged him to get his sons to go to Alford and enlist. He met his match. "Aren't ye ane o' the elders? D'ye no' ken that's nae a Sunday subjek'? That'll keep till Mononday," and with a high head he walked into the kirk.

This reminds one of another story, which belongs to Kincardineshire and the kirkyard crack. "If it warna Sunday, Peter, what wad ye be speerin' for yon black stirkie o' yours?" "If it warna Sunday, I wad be speerin' nae less than sax-and-twenty poond, Geordie." "Weel, Peter, ye're nae blate tae speir siller; but I'll be ower on Tyesday's nicht tae see ye aboot it, an' get a luck penny back frae yer price."

Another story attaches to Strathbogie, where a retired colonel was most active in securing young farm servants for the army. He was so impatient that before a meeting of the parishioners had begun he went through the hall making personal application to the young farmers and ploughmen in their seats.



But from the former he got only the answer, "We maun bide at hame an' grou corn for the fowks"; and from the latter the reply, "An' we maun plew the lan' an' cut the corn." A great demand had at this time sprung up for oats for the French cavalry, and the farmers had been besieged by the corn merchants for large supplies at highly increased prices. The Colonel went to the platform, and in his speech said, "All the farmers here with one consent have begun to make excuse—Corn! Corn! Corn! Nothing here but growing corn and feeding cattle." The meeting ended, and, still persisting, the Colonel went to the door to prosecute his mission. Great was the fun excited when an old farmer went for him in the following terms, "Fatever did ye mean by miscaain' gweed coarn? Arena ye a Coarnel yersel'? Ye shudna cry doon coarn."

We had a recruiting meeting in Banff with most stirring and eloquent speeches; but the result was at first somewhat beneath our expectations. There were many excuses. One good and gentle mother spoke to her son about his duty, but found him irresponsive. He was the only son, and a mother's heart yearned over him and was greatly divided between affection and regard for his good name. "Dinna think, ma laddie," she said, "that I want ye tae gang tae the war; but, Weelum, if I was you an' nae yir mither, naethin' wad keep me frae the front, laddie." William went.

Visiting in our fishing village one day in November, I talked of the need of young men to some fine-looking lads in the street. "I wad gang gledly," said one handsome fellow, "ef it warna for ma mither." "Weel, Bob," at once replied an old woman behind us, who had been within earshot, "it's the verra first time I iver heard ye sey ye caret a button for

yir mither." I am delighted to add that Bob ere long was among the mine-lifters off the Yorkshire coast at the time of the visit to Scarborough of the terrible German cruisers.

In a fishing village near us a little girl was sitting beside her mother before the winter fire, both busily knitting. Suddenly the girl said, "Mother, is the war near dune?" "Na, lassie, na," was the reply. "I houpe," said the little creature, "it winna be throu' afore I get ma stockin' wuven for the sodgers."

A Banffshire laird was doing his very best to persuade his cottars' sons to join the Gordon Territorials. "Going to the war, Jamie, I hope," he said to a big milksop who was the petted son of a foolish mother. "Na, sir; ma fouks winna hear o't." "Your folks, Jamie? Why should they stand in the way of your going to your country's service?" "Weel, sir, ye see they think I'm ower saft i' the constitushin, an' I wud be shure tae dee. An' they a' say the Germans are terrible fond o' sawsages, an' niver speir far the meat comes frae." He was an impossible.

A recruiting colonel, going through a "Muckle Market" in the centre of Aberdeenshire, picked out a fine tall fellow and urged him to join the ranks. He declined, however, and on the way home was attacked for his conduct by a farmer friend. "A fine six-footer like you should be wi' the sodgers." "Ah, but that's juist it, ye ken. The Koarnel said the Germans cudna miss me; an' I juist thocht, ye see (this in a confidential tone), that they dinna want fouk that's shure tae be shot."

The magpie or pyet is no favourite in Scotland, for, according to the old rhyme,

"Ane is ane; twa is grief;  
Three's a weddin'; four's death."

In the end of July of 1914 the wife of a farm servant near Banff saw two pyets fly up into a dovecote on the end of the barn. Within a day or two Germany declared war on Russia. When next week she read the news in the *Banffshire Journal*, she exclaimed excitedly to her husband, "Noo, gudeman, dinna ye see I was richt? Ye lichtifeed me when I spoke tae ye about the twa pyets. But see noo, the birds kent better. As sure's death, I kent there wud be war."

The Hoch der Kaiser poem has been much recited of late, and the verse is greatly quoted :

"Der Kaiser of dis Vaterland  
Und Gott on high all dings command;  
Ve two—ach! Don't you oonderstand?  
Meeself—und Gott!"

It is not so generally known that the author was a Tomintoul student who studied at Aberdeen University, then entered the Free Church, but ultimately went to literature. Some years ago he died when engaged in journalistic work, and literature lost a worthy son.

At a tea-party in a small farmhouse lately, when the husbands had gone out to see the cattle and have a smoke, the women fell a-talking of the war. One with a vein of humour said, "Weel, if the Germans get ower here, yer men 'ill be a' shot, an' they'll tak' ye a' for wives to themsel's." "Gweedsakes," replied one devoid of that vein, "that wud be waur nor shootin's. Cudna ye get the laird tae gie them crafts an' bring their ain wives an' bairnies wi' them?"

A Scottish doctor told me he was one day standing in a huge London crowd watching a great military procession pass along to Waterloo Station to entrain for France. The first battalions were Lancashires

and Devons. Near my friend stood a well-built artisan holding his boy in his arms to see the soldiers. At last came the Seaforths, and the skirl of the bagpipes was distinctly heard at some distance. "Ay, ay, laddie," and the accent was good Buchan, "here come oor chaps noo. Here's the rael Glenlivet for ye, ma lad; it's wirth a' the ithers put thegither, isn't it noo?" Oh, the wail o' the pipes! how it does in another land stir a Scotchman's blood!

To every one the war is of interest; but naturally it is looked at from different points of view, even in the same farm kitchen. Said a young ploughman sitting at the fire, "It's awfu' interestin', this war. I dinna ken what we'll dae fin it's a' ower. We'll hae naethin' wirth speakin' o'." "Hoot," said the kitchen lassie, "dinna say that. The lads are awa' the noo, an' I hae naethin' tae think o', but they'll be hame sune, an' the coortin' will be awfu'; we'll be a' gettin' mairriet syne. I wuss the war were a' ower. It hisna left a lad about the hail pairish."

The fears of this girl were not verified. The first few months of the war have been in the north of Scotland specially marked by the great number of soldiers' marriages. The fact is, that the sudden call to military service in a great many cases of courtship brought matters to a head. The idea of parting became intolerable to both, and they resolved that the marriage should make them one without any further delay. A beautiful story is told of this kind in the upper part of Donside. Donald was shepherd to a certain laird, "aboon the Brig o' Buchat," whose mansion house was annually tenanted in the shooting season by a great London merchant. The shepherd's affections had for some time been given to the tablemaid in this house. And many a happy

evening Donald had spent in the kitchen, sharing, no doubt, in some of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Suddenly the summons came to Donald, who was a Territorial, to join the force in Aberdeen. Off he went with it the same evening to Maggie. But though they had been keeping company for some time, the shepherd had never ventured to put the question directly to his sweetheart; and he had also a fear that Maggie might not be contented with the humble fare and furnishings of a shepherd's sheiling. With rather tremulous feelings he said, "Maggie, things maun come to a heid noo." Maggie's head went down at once, and Donald forgot all that he had meant to say, but after a long pause he added, "Maggie, wasna I here on Wednesday? An' wasna I back again on Saterdag, an' wasna I here on Sunday besides?" "Oh yes, Donald," was all the answer. "Weel, Maggie, dinna ye smell a rat?" said Donald. Maggie's head fell lower; but Donald was determined to finish it. "Maggie, I hae juist two questions tae speir at ye. Maggie, can ye dae withoot fine suppers? An' can ye dae withoot fine dresses at night? for ye see I'm only a shepherd." Maggie hesitated, and Donald's Highland pride suddenly stirred his blood. He rose to his feet and held out his hand to say good-bye, when Maggie sprang to her feet, saying, "Donald, Donald, dinna gang awa'. What care I for dresses and suppers! I can do withoot a'thing but yersel', Donald." They got married by the parish minister the very night before Donald left in the motor-bus for Aberdeen.

The aeroplanes going from Montrose to Cromarty, or *vice versa*, usually fly over Banffshire and Morayshire. About the time of the attack by the German cruisers on Yorkshire, and when German aeroplanes were hovering over Dover and Sheerness, they

created a great terror among the rural population. "Did ye hear an awfu' soun' aboot twa o' clock this mornin'?" said a Glenlivet woman to her neighbour. "Na, I didna. Fat was't?" "Ane o' thae orroplanes, as they ca' them; so I juist hurriet John oot tae rin doon an' lowse the dog!"

One farmer seeing an aeroplane skimming along the side of the Knock Hill, called to his men to run and lock the stable doors! "Fat's the eese o' lockin' them?" asked the cattleman. "Hoots!" said the farmer, "ye dinna ken thae Germans fat they will dae. They say they eat the horses."

When the Territorials at first left for the war in August and September much anxiety was felt by wives and families by the loss of the weekly wage. One woman in Aberdeen fell into deep distress, and refused any comfort or even sympathy from the Red Cross ladies who visited her and offered temporary relief. "Na, na; ye needna tell me. I'll never see Jeems agane." The tears flowed so copiously that the visitor offered to bring next day the secretary of the Red Cross Society to give her more assurance of the promised Government support. They both came, and found her still in apparently deep grief. The gentleman urged her to control her emotions, and to listen to him; but her only reply was, "Dinna tell me; we'll niver see Jeems agane. We'll a' be stairved wi' hungir." The gentleman was irritated. "Do listen to me, and don't be foolish. You'll get not less than fifteen shillings a week, and two and sixpence for your boy. Mark my words! Seventeen shillings and sixpence!" Tears instantly ceased. "Ye dinna mean't; seaventeen an' saxpence, did ye say?" "Yes, I did, and I mean it." "Gweed sakes! will I get a' that? That *will* be a ferlie! Keep Jeems as lang as ye like!"

A drunken fellow, a regular wife-beater, went off by train to Aberdeen at the beginning of the war and enlisted. He returned late next evening for his clothes, and to say good-bye, talking of his new military life in very boastful terms. "I'm listed noo; I'm a rale sodjer; an' I'll be aff sune to Belgium tae bate a lot o' Germans!" The wife quietly replied, "Weel, ma gude man, if ye bate the Gairmans as weel as ye've beaten yer wife, ye'll cum back naething less than a General."

A Banffshire woman, whose husband got wounded at the battle of the Aisne, was much visited by kind Red Cross ladies, who took her many gifts. About the same time she got through the Post Office her first instalment of weekly Government allowance, along with what was due for eight past weeks. The husband had been a careless fellow, a mere day-labourer, given so much to beer that she had seldom got more than ten shillings a week for herself and her large family. Now she had got some £12 put into her hands, and a weekly allowance assured of over twenty-six shillings. "I'm juist rale gled Bob's awa' I nivver wes sae wealthy in ma life. I've peyed a' ma debts, an' I've three puns tae masel' yet! Losh me, it's a gran' time this!"

An old crofter became a great talker about the war, and went often at night to the smiddy to illumine the ploughmen about the fighting, using some big words, which he borrowed from the evening newspaper, and which had a wonderful sound about them. Next Sunday the parish minister preached upon the nation's duty, and as this man came out he pushed up to the schoolmaster, saying, "That wus a gran' sermon we got upo' the war, it wis fu' o' fine paregorics!" "Surely," said the Dominie, "you mean panegyrics." "Ay, ay," replied the ambitious

talker ; " but ye see baith thae things are anonymous, aren't they ? " He meant to say they were synonymous.

A minister was visiting his parishioners during the war, and meeting the blacksmith he said, " It is very cold, Donald, standing at this windy corner. I'm going to call on your wife ; come in. " " Na, minister, " said Donald, " I'm no gaun inside, the lum's reekin' there ; it's better ootside. " The minister did not comprehend the situation, and ventured in. But as he advanced towards the kitchen along the dark passage, suddenly a big heather broom met him full in the face, and a voice screamed, " Tak' that for yer brose throw the reek. " He hurriedly retired outside. " John, " he said good humouredly, " I think you should offer for Kitchener's army. Nothing could be worse in the trenches than the frontal attack I met in your own kitchen. I'm returning among the wounded and without honour. By all means go, Donald. "

A Church of Scotland deaconess tells the story of two Belgian children who had been adopted by a kindly Deeside lady. It shows the trust and deep affection which the British soldier has inspired in the hearts of the people of Belgium. The little girl cried all through the night and through the forenoon after her arrival at the Scottish home. Her father had been killed, and her mother was still in Belgium, and she refused to be comforted. Late in the afternoon the young family doctor called, clad in khaki. Scarcely had he entered the room when the little girl ran to him with outstretched arms, crying, " Bittish, Bittish ! " She nestled in the kind doctor's arms, and almost immediately fell asleep. He laid her on the couch, where she slept a whole round of the clock.



No greater mental suffering was endured than by those whose sons or husbands were reported from the front as missing, and who might be either killed, or wounded, or prisoners in Germany. The following lines, written by a small farmer, with the deep feeling of a true poet, tell of this agony :

" When dad gaed awa' wi' the Gordons,  
The Gordons sae gallant and gay,  
At the door he speirt if ma mither  
For him wud aye earnestly pray.

And she promised to pray that the Saviour  
Would watch ower him on the plain,  
Keep him safe in the midst o' a' danger,  
Bring him back to his bairnies again.

For seaven weary weeks ilka evenin'  
Frae the Bible ma mither has read,  
An' wi' tears in her e'en ilka mornin'  
For dad she has earnestly prayed

But oh ! fu' weel div I ken it  
(Tho' tae me it canna be said),  
My mither is sad 'cause we kenna  
Gin daddy be livin' or dead."

Mistakes will occur regarding war affairs, the rural people not being at first acquainted with military terms. A newspaper boy rushed out from a country station into which the train had brought a parcel of evening papers, shouting " War News ! War News ! " and an old woman, too poor to buy one, asked him, " What's the news the nicht ? " With an exultant voice he cried out, " We've driven the Germans back twenty miles ! Hurrah ! " Her face fell ominously. " That's juist like us," she said. " Aye sae saft ! Driven them, nesty craters ! Sallna, hed I hed my wye o't, I wud hae taen the beets aff them and made them gang every inch o' the road on their ain feet."

A chaplain from the front tells the following story of two Gordon Highlanders over their bully beef in the evening. "Wha are thae Allies they speak about, Donald? I ken the Frenchies and the Belgians; an' I've come to mak' oot the clink o' their tongues, but wha are thae Allies?" "I dinna ken, Jock, whaur they come frae," said the other; "but I ken this, they're deevils at fechtin'."

Paying a visit to a cottar house I found the good wife busy as usual among milk dishes. On asking how all were, and hoping they were well, she calmly replied, in a matter-of-fact tone, "Oh ay, we're a' weel; only Jean's man's been killt at the war." This was her son-in-law who had fallen. On asking more closely about the young widow, the mother, in the same calm tone, said, "Jean's sair made aboot him; but she'll be as weel without him. He wis aye a fechtin' billy, an' wud nivver saddle doon tae onything about the place."

The news of the firing of the German cruisers on Hartlepool and Scarborough created a great sensation round the Moray Firth. One mistress told the news to her servant in a farm kitchen that overlooks the sea. "What will we do, Janet, when the Germans come here an' fire their shells at oor fairm toon?" "I'll juist gang an' hod masel' amang the coals." "An' will that be a'?" said the mistress. "Na," said the maid; "it's ma kist I'm maist anxious aboot. I maun sen' it hame tae Huntly wi' a' ma braws in't, an' pit fifteen gweed miles atween ma kist an' the sea."

An entirely wrong conception would be created if these stories made the reader think that there were many hangers-back from the army in the north-east counties of Scotland. That was not the case. Though it was with such that difficulties did arise,

yet the majority were most eager to serve their country, and some parishes on Deveronside and Donside were all but swept clean of their young men by the onrushing tide of loyalty. One parish lost its last young man, who, though his help was imperatively needed at home, at last said to his aged and infirm father, "I canna bide nae langer; I feel ilka ee looks doon upo' me." Still some eager volunteers found both family circumstances and physical defects insurmountable. And among the latter, strange as it may look, an outstanding physical hindrance has been the teeth!

In one village so many lads had been 'plucked' by the examining officer for decayed teeth that ultimately a young apprentice dentist in Aberdeen, who belonged to the village, was applied to, and the problem was solved for several by his loan of a vulcanite set of teeth. Two or three had, with a pair of nippers, emptied their upper gums and glued into them the loaned plate. The loan came to another lad whom it did not fit well, but he gaily went to the officer. "You don't look nineteen yet, my good fellow." "Ah! but I'm nineteen a' the same." "Well, show me your teeth and I'll soon know." Looking suspiciously at them he said, "No, never! they're too wobbly." "That's funny," said the lad. "What's funny?" "Weel," said the lad, "that's the verra identical set that passed Jamie Fraser last nicht."

This 'teeth' story is capped by a 'trouser' story told in Banffshire, but which came from one of Dr. Fleming's congregation of St. Columba's in London. There it is counted a great honour to belong to the London Scottish Battalion. A young Englishman, possessed of no great means, was keenly desirous to get into these ranks, and made application

at their office. On being asked, "Are you of Scottish parentage?" he answered, "No." "Scottish grandparents?" "No." He got a blank refusal. "You won't do—your accent betrays you." At this moment a happy thought occurred to the young aspirant for Scottish honours. "I've some property in Perthshire; will that qualify?" "It might," said the officer, and upon this information the application was duly registered, and within a week he was proudly sporting the kilt. To a Scottish friend in the ranks he confided the explanation. "I was awfully glad that poking fellow did not ask any particulars about my property in Perthshire. The fact is, I had nothing but a pair of trousers at Pullar's Dye Works." We are convinced, however, that the other members of the London Scottish have a better standing and a larger stake in their country than our young friend. The London Scottish have covered themselves with honour on the plains of France in 1915.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NORTH-EAST FARMER AND COTTAR

WHEN I came to Banffshire in 1873 only the largest farmers had gigs. The others came to the weekly market in carts, bringing with them their wives, their daughters, seated on sacks of straw, and with baskets of butter and eggs beside them. Gradually the carts were given up for gigs, and the gigs for dog carts of the newest pattern. To-day it is a rare sight to see even a crofter and his wife in a cart at kirk or market. Not a few farmers have automobiles, or, if they drive, they have well-bred horses that never go inside the shafts of a cart.

This diversity in the vehicles tends to lead to a social distinction in the grading of the families in a rural parish, not altogether favourable to the old kindly ways of friendship. A crofter who comes to the market in his small cart said, "The aul' gig fairmer aye kens ye; the braw dog-cairt ane nicht lat on an' speir for ye<sup>6</sup>; but the man wi' the big motor he's nae time tae gie ye even a wag o' the han'. He gangs by like thunner an lichtnin', an' he hes nae mair time than them tae speak tae a body."

The laird of Ardmiddle was not averse to going to Turriff market to see his cattle sold by his trusted servant and grieve, Sandy Paterson, and to meet his tenants and other friends there. On one occasion he had a very fine lot of fat cattle to sell for the

Christmas market, and was particularly anxious to be present, while Sandy was just as anxious to have the honour of securing the top price of the market. The griever soon met the southern dealers and asked a big price at the commencement of the tedious bargaining that was then the custom. However, by the end of the tussle, which the laird carefully watched from behind his man, the difference between seller and buyer amounted to only half a crown. Over that sum per head for the 'stirks' they haggled and quarrelled, until the dealer impatiently turned round and referred the matter to the laird, who yielded the point and let the cattle go at the buyer's offer. This was to 'brak the market,' and Sandy keenly felt the affront done to his honour on a high day when engaged with foemen worthy of his steel. Turning his back on his employer, he stalked away to another part of the market, whither the laird soon went in search, and timorously asked him to follow the buyer and secure the price of the cattle. Sandy was not to be so easily pacified, and replied, "Na, na, laird; gang yersel' and see aboot the bawbees; them that sells the nowt githers in the siller."

A landlord in Aberdeenshire, of somewhat penurious habits, was very anxious to secure an excellent farmer on an adjoining property as a tenant upon his own estate. He accordingly asked his land-steward to put himself in the way of the farmer at the next feeding market and ask him to consider an offer which he made to him. The farmer did not put the same value on the vacant farm as its proprietor did, and made no further response. His silence worried the worthy squire, who, meeting him on the road one day, stopped his carriage and with much courtesy asked for the farmer's health and the welfare of his family, and then somewhat brusquely

put the question, "Well, James, are you going to entertain my excellent offer." The reply was instant and to the point. "Na, I canna enterteen't. But I maun say honestly, laird, it hes deen muckle to enterteen me." The laird smiled at the clever reply, and they shook hands in the best of humour.

An elderly cottar woman, who kept a dirty smoky house which it was not pleasant to enter, and which had not been properly cleaned and dusted for twenty years, fell into something like a decline. She sent at last for the doctor, who, on entering, learned by his sense of smell the causes of her threatening consumption. A neighbour had urged her to go to the 'Walls o' Macduff,' or else to Strathpeffer, and to drink the waters there. She could not afford the latter, but wished much to try the chalybeate waters of Tarlair, near Macduff. Like many more she consulted the physician only to get him to approve of what she had already determined on. "Noo, doctor, dinna ye think I wad be the better o' the Walls? I've juist set ma hert on gaun to the Walls, whaur Johnnie Gibb got sae muckle benefeet." "Yes; it is just the wells that you're needing," said the physician. "Weel," she replied, "ma neebars aye tae me tae gang tae the Strath: which Walls wad ye say were best, doctor?" "I should advise the well outside your own garden," was his answer, "and a good application of its waters to your person and your parlour."

I came to know well a small farmer who was very fond of reading. He had a considerable knowledge of history, was very fond of Mathematics, Euclid's Element and Algebraic problems, and he was a keen politician. But latterly he got tired of politics, having become convinced it was a party game, and that the truth lay somewhere between Liberals and

Conservatives. I record a talk I had with him before he died which left its impress on my memory. "The warst thing aboot politics is that y' juist only get half the truth frae either. I canna get the hale truth frae ony o' them. Noo, I've come to believe that half a truth is the vera biggest lee ye can tell. It's sae misleadin': altho' it's nae aff the square altogether, it'll lead ye into as mony mistak's as though ye believed a lee. Hoo winna politicians speak the hale truth and naethin' but the truth? I like to see a subject a' roun': ye dinna ken Benachie by seein' the half o't. And ye dinna ken the truth aboot oor Government till ye see a' sides." On another occasion he said, "Ye see, sir, between richt and wrang there's nae a middle road. I didna aye ken that. But bocht wit lasts langest, tho' it's dear fees ye pay for a raith (term) at the school o' experience."

Some thirty years ago I met a farmer, a wise, active, diligent man who always worked with his men in the fields both in spring and in harvest. In the worst days, the hard eighties, when many farmers succumbed because of losses, he seemed to thrive, and I asked him how it was he was so successful. He said, "It's very simple. I mak' it a rule to rise wi' the men, and to see them yoke ilka mornin'. Ye see the maister's presence is the farmer's profit. I hae aye foun' that my ain ee is the best grieve. When a fairmer lives in his wark he'll get a livin' by his wark." I asked whether the men liked his eye always to be on them. "The warst dinna like it, but the best like it," he said. "Ye see they ken they're seen and thocht weel o'. Gude warkmen like to be seen at their wark."

Early rising is universal among the cottars and farmers. Many rise before five o'clock, practically



all before six. Their talk is full of the benefits of the morning hour. "The best mountain dew is the mornin' dew" is a saying in some parts. "In summer I gang to bed wi' the sun, an' rise wi' the sun,"—*i.e.* to bed at 9 p.m., and up at 4 a.m. A lazy crofter who was never seen early at work was spoken of as "aye in a hurry and aye ahint; he lost an oor in the mornin' and he was tryin' to catch't a' day." "Lie in bed, lose yer brose" is a kindred proverbial saying. "Ne'er lat the sun see ye lying in bed" may refer to both early rising and to the need of sowing and of cutting in the warm dry sunshine. "She maun be sune up that wad cheat the tod" (fox) refers to the care needed to preserve the poultry and to the watchfulness required to prevent egg-stealing.

A cottar's wife near Keith had died suddenly, leaving five little children, the eldest barely nine. A distant relative, who had little patience with young people, came to keep house. Sadly missing the mother's love, the little ones were continually reproached with being in the housekeeper's 'road.' One cold wintry day they had drawn their stools round the kitchen fire, and did not move when the housekeeper proceeded to make preparations for baking oatcakes. In querulous tones she demanded, "Hoo can I bake an' a' you sittin' roon' the fire?" "Oor mither used to bake ower oor heids," said one of the wee mites pathetically.

A farmer's wife in Aberdeenshire, industrious and thrifty, was endeavouring to help her husband in the education of a large family by cultivating the best methods of breeding poultry, and by selling the eggs in the best market. But the grocers in the neighbouring town, who usually purchased them from her, combined during spring to give only 6½d. for the dozen, and her own grocer proved to be the

chairman of the committee to whom was entrusted the charge of this matter. The knowledge of this fact made her extremely displeased with the merchant at the Tuesday market, when her husband drove her there, the gig laden with baskets of beautiful eggs. On learning the price, she at once sent her husband back with the produce and the poultry and went to have it out with the merchant. With the most smiling face he greeted her and hoped she had brought the usual supply of her fine eggs, than which he never handled any better. His polite obsequiousness was rudely disturbed by her caustic reply, "Na, na, I hae nae eggs the day. Wad ye believe it, thae hens o' mine are thrawn cratur's : they hae a' joined thegither nae to rax themsel's in layin' eggs for saxpence ha'penny the dizzen. They're thrawn wratches, the hens ; but I'm to lat them get their ain wey this time."

One of the finest specimens of a farmer's wife that I ever met in the north was the late Mrs. Ronaldson of Little Gight, on the estate of Haddo. Her husband and she attended the church of the late Very Rev. Dr. Milne of Fyvie, one of the Moderators of the Church of Scotland, who often spoke to me of her. Mr. Ronaldson was somewhat vain, and greatly admired his clever wife. He had won the first prize at the National Highland Agricultural Show at Edinburgh for a bull—a very great honour ; he had also recently got a threshing-mill of the very newest type introduced into his steading, which the late Lord Aberdeen came to see, and at the inauguration of which Mrs. Ronaldson gave a luncheon-party. His Lordship had said some kind things about the ady and about the enterprising farmer who, being no spokesman, replied in a brief sentence : " There's noo, ma Lord, wi' a new mill. and a first prize

bull, and a wife that hasna her marrow in a' the Braes o' Gight; and fa's like me?" The good Earl said kindly that his tenant has absolutely no reason to be discontented.

In Aberdeenshire and Banffshire rents are paid more by the rearing of cattle than by the production of corn. The cattle may be either shorthorns or the black polled Angus; but from them mainly come the profits that pay the landlords' rents. In consequence farmers in these quarters become specialists in the feeding and fattening of cattle, which are known in the London markets as 'prime Scotch beef.' At such farms the man who attends the cattle, known usually as the 'bailie,' is a well-paid official, frequently a married man with a house of his own attached to the farm.

These cattlemen appear to be influenced by their environment, and their nature

"is subdued

To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."

They live among the cattle the major part of each day, and know them as friends and companions. One of them spoke to me of the difference between the men's bothy, with its noise and its coarse language, and the byre, with its silent and gentle inhabitants. "The cattle hae nae quarrels," he said, "and use nae coorse words. I've fifty o' them, an' never heard ane flyte anither. Ilka ane's content wi' their ain neeps, an' nivver wants his neebur's. Nae gossip and nae greed; it wad be a guid lesson for mony folks to come into a big byre." His words struck me very much as expressing an idea which I had seen in that beautiful "Song of Myself," by the American poet, Walt Whitman. That song tells how much continuous pleasure the big-hearted poet

found in flowers and trees, in frogs and crickets and every kind of beast. His extraordinary optimism has been erroneously spoken of as pagan; he simply sees comrades and friends in all the animal kingdom.

"I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained,

I stand and look at them long and long;

They do not swear and whine about their condition,

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,

Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things."

The quietness and stillness of the valleys among Scottish mountains have often impressed me. One summer, when staying at a farmhouse which we rented high up among the hills of Donside; we could during the day see almost everything going on in the strath below; and at night we heard every sound from the village a mile distant. The bark of the dogs throughout the parish in the evening came distinctly to our ears. When I spoke of it to the farmer he gave utterance to his feelings in a pithy sentence. "The day has een, sir, but the nicht has lugs. I ken mair o' what's gaun on at nicht than i' the daytime. There's nae a hoowlet catches a moose or a mole but I can tell't." I believe that the owl, after such a feast, utters an unusually cheerful note, well known to the trained ear.

A Scottish crofter from Botriphnie, Banffshire, went out to see his two sons, now successful merchants in an Alberta village in Canada. It was summer and very hot. What struck him as remarkable was the absence of chimneys on the houses. He did not know that in winter the whole house is heated by pipes from a stove in the underground cellar below

the house. He asked, "Whaur are yer chimneys? Is't aye as het as this?" "Oh no," was the reply; "in winter it goes below zero." "Weel, I widna like to bide in this place wi' nae fires," said he. "Oh, but we get heat from below," said the son. This seemed worse. "Frae below? Gwedsakes! Do ye deal wi' that place? I'll no' bide here anither day."

Some time ago the son of a Banffshire cottar emigrated to Saskatchewan. He got employment at farmwork among people who were mostly Russians, Italians, and Galicians, who spoke another language and left the lad in a great loneliness. He sent home a very pathetic letter. I do not think I ever read such a homesick epistle. It brought tears to all our eyes. "I keep at my wark, but I wad fain be hame and see the auld hoose wi' the bonnie rowan tree at the gable, and the bonnie lilacs at the door. I canna bear the zinc-roofed hooses here, and wad like juist to get in below the bonnie stobbit thatch that I helped masel' to patch up wi' new strae and clay. An' I wad like sair tae see the auld kirk an' the kirkyaird whaur we met in oor best claes ilka Sunday, and the bell rang as we gethered till't. There's nae kirks here, and nae kirkyairds, and nae Sunday, and nae bonnie bells. Mony a nicht in the burnin' summer I can hardly get a breath wi' the het zinc roof and the wooden hoose, and I dream and dream o' the auld hame in the bonnie glen in Banffshire, and the linties singin' a' the day. There's nae linties here ava'. Oh, I wis' I wes hame! I wud gie a' I possess o' their dollars here juist tae hae an hour's seat in the neuk next the window, mither." It did not surprise me that the lad appeared one morning not many weeks after his letter. He is now a well-contented foreman in a Banffshire farm,

and thinks that, after all, Saskatchewan is not better than Scotland.

Nowadays, farmers and farm servants do not associate together as in former times. As a little boy I can remember being in farm kitchens when the whole of the servants, along with women-knitters from neighbouring farms, would assemble together with the farmer and his wife on the most cordial and familiar terms. To-day, on the other hand, they live in different parts of the house, and the men-servants scarcely ever see the farmer's wife and family. Formerly they were one household with one interest. The gudewife 'span a thread'; the young women carried on their knitting in the most amicable rivalry; the young men did light jobs for their own use, mending whips, cutting pieces of wood, and making brushes of broom or heather for the stable. A local poet speaks of these times when the 'old order' had not yet changed, "yielding place to new," in words which exactly photograph the mirthful and happy scene :

"The littlins play at kiek and hide  
Ahint the kists and tables;  
The fairmer sits anent the licht  
An' reads a piece o' Wallace Wecht,  
Or maybe Æsop's Fables.  
The gaudman sits an' toasts his nose,  
Or awkwardly heel-caps his hose,  
Or mak's yoke-sticks o' rodde; n;  
Auld Luckydaddy win's at brutches,  
An' Granny tells them tales o' witches,  
Until the kail be sodden."

This would go on for two hours, when the kail-brose would be put upon the table, and all went off to bed to rise early for next day's work.

A poor crofter, possessed of not a little dry wit, was riding his old horse along the Speyside road

near Aberlour, when he was accosted by a well-dressed man who was very proud of having been recently made a J.P. through the influence of the member for the county. "Ah, my old friend," said the new Justice, "you have mounted your horse to-day; I think an ass might have served you better." The reply was given in a slow voice: "A better man than either you or me, sir, rode upon an ass on the wye to Jerusalem; but nooadays asses are a ransom price. Ye see, they're makin' them a' justices o' the peace."

Near Dufftown there resided a young man mentally deficient, who helped at home with the herding of the cattle on the hillside. One day he attended church, when the minister happened to preach from the text, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." The croft was not far from the minister's glebe, and next week the lad was detected by the minister coolly allowing his father's cows to trespass upon the new hay of the minister, who very properly found fault with him, and said that such a thing must not be repeated. "Odds me," said the lad, "fat am I tae dee atween ye? The ither day ye preached that children ocht to obey their parents in the Lord; and ma mither hinted tae me tae let the calves in amang yer girse tae get a fresh bite; and noo ye forbid me. Wha am I tae plaze, ma mither or the minister?"

A half-witted creature walking along a Banffshire road was met by an inquisitive individual who put the question to him, "Whaur are ye gaun the day, Jockie?" "I'm gaun somewey," was the vague reply. "And wha are ye gaun tae see?" "I'm gaun tae see somebody," was the reserved answer. "And what will ye say tae somebody?" "Nae muckle," was again answered. "And what hae ye

in yer basket there, Jockie?" Quickly came the answer, "Something fine; but I winna lat you see't."

The Scottish farmer is canny and not in the least given to gushing. He has an extreme dislike to superlatives in conversation, and prefers to state his opinions in moderate language. The Nor' East is and always was the centre of Moderatism. In all things it prefers, with Aristotle, wise men, the *via media*. None the less is it sincere. But its sincerity and truthfulness are thoroughly consistent with a character that is cautious and a temperament inclined to the phlegmatic.

The two following stories I got from a minister's wife in this locality. The lady was calling on a small farmer in her husband's parish, a man of few words but of great diligence. "It is a most lovely day, James," she remarked as she entered his parlour. "Ay, it's no' that ill," was the reply. "And your view from your window, James, is so delightful and so lovely; I could sit here all day and enjoy it." "Weel," said the farmer, "there's a wheen fields o' rael gweed girss doon there." "And this collie of yours is a perfect beauty; he is already quite friendly with me." "Oh ay," was the answer, "he's no' parteecklar wha he tak's up wi'."

The same lady vouches for the following conversation. Two men from the neighbourhood of Tomintoul met on the road that runs along that most beautiful of Banffshire glens, the valley of the Avon. Lachlan was the first to speak. "It's fine weather for the craps, Dugald." "Yiss, no' ill ava'," was the reply. "Ye'll be hadin doon to Ballindalloch the day." "Weel," said Dugald, "mebbe I'll no' be gaun just sae far." Lachlan tried again. "Ye'll be makin' for Glenlivet, I'm thinkin'." "Ye're no' far wrang,"



replied the latter. "I wuss wi' a' ma hert I was gaun wi' ye tae Glenlivet!" exclaimed Lachlan. "Dae ye? Weel, ye nicht dae waur," was the cool reply.

When at Strathpeffer in 1911 I got the following anecdote from a legal friend who was drinking the waters at that famous spa. He was sipping the sulphuretted liquid from his tumbler along with some farmers from Ross-shire, when one said, "Ye eome frae Banffshire, I hear; a fine coonty an' fu' o' distilleries." "Yes," was the reply, "we have a great many of them." "An' Glenlivet's one of them, is it no'?" "Yes, it's quite near me." "Och, an' ye'll get the rael Glenlivet tae yer supper ilka nicht, will ye?" "Well, if they like, I suppose they may have it," was the response. "Och, och, siccan a gran' place to live in!"

A lady friend of mine was living one summer for a short holiday in that most remote and beautiful parish, the Cabrach. An English tourist was in the same small inn, and was full of complaints about the absence of many articles which could be had so easily in the city. The Cabrach miller called at the hotel with a sack of meal, and the Londoner had his opportunity. "What do you people do in winter, I wonder? How do you live?" "Brawly," was the brief reply. "But if you are ill you have no druggist, and you are miles away from a doctor. What if you were taken suddenly ill? You would most certainly die." "Hoot ay," was the calm answer, "juist dee a naitral death."

## CHAPTER V

### CONCERNING THRIFT: A SCOTTISH VIRTUE

THE thrift of the Scots is proverbial. It has been an essential element in their success. With a bare soil and a somewhat cold climate they could not have prospered apart from industry and economy. And wherever they have gone they have carried this rare virtue of thrift with them.

Not unfrequently they have had to endure a little pleasant banter about it at the hands of others. Ever since the famous cartoon of *Punch* made 'Sandy and his saxpence' known to all it has been the custom at social gatherings in London to remind Scotchmen of this national virtue, and to speak of it as a national weakness. But we hope the Scots will ever be proud of it. So soon as it descends from a virtue to an infirmity, from the love of independence to the mean vice of stinginess, the glory of Scotland has gone from it.

How often have we heard the witty remark of the Archdeacon of Calcutta, made at a St. Andrew's Day dinner, which he attended there, quoted as if it were final? They had been discussing the question why Scotland elected St. Andrew to be their patron saint. "Gentlemen," said the humorous Archdeacon, "I have given this subject my thoughtful consideration, and I have come to the conclusion that St. Andrew was chosen by the Scots because he dis-

covered the lad who had the loaves and the fishes in his basket." This was an excellent jest, and was so received by the Scottish Brotherhood at that festal board. The thrifty character of the Scottish people can easily endure such witticisms. For their thrift is not inconsistent with liberality; and, in truth, it lies behind all their hospitality and their kindness.

It is not denied that the *auri sacra fames* is known in Scotland. In what part of the civilised world is it unknown? It is as universal as human selfishness and as constant as the vices that prey upon society. But every one who is intimately acquainted with the Scottish people knows that, with all their shortcomings and occasional deflections, they respond quickly to noble impulses. They are liberal to every good cause, and among them hospitality is a universal virtue. If caution go along with their kindness, it is because kindness is sometimes sorely abused, and a Scot cannot endure to see what he so highly values traded upon. He detests luxury. It is no part of his life-purpose to end his career in luxurious old age or to allow his children to cultivate the habits of the spendthrift. And if he toil hard to accumulate wealth, he wishes by it to further the public welfare and to make Scotland a more pleasant place to live in.

Thrift is that by which a man thrives. Its origin is found in a similar Icelandic word, or in the cognate Danish verb *trives*. When we recall the affinity between the Scots and the Danes, who, if not brothers, are at least first cousins, and remember how the Danes peopled many of our north-eastern fishing villages, we do not wonder at finding the races connected by this fine virtue. The thrifty Dane (as Professor Jacobson of Copenhagen University

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once told me) is at one with the canny Scot in the cultivation of it. He believes thrift is at the root of success.

"How could John thrive?" said a farmer to me; "his wife has nae thrift. There's nae management about the fairm; a' thing's throw ither. He's just like a pinner that I've got in ma byre; she canna thrive because she canna disjeest her meat. A' thing gangs throw her and dis her nae gweed. There's nae richt disjeestion about yon fairm; a' thing gangs like corn throw a sieve. There's nae thrift, an' there'll be nae thrivin'.

Money gained by inheritance is not always a benefit or a blessing. To their owners some fortunes thus received become misfortunes. The sudden acquisition of wealth undermines the character and breeds folly of the worst kind. Such was the effect it produced on a railway porter whom I knew. His brother abroad died intestate, and he inherited many thousands. Retiring from his healthy occupation, he betook himself to daily indulgences in liquor and to treating acquaintances who were really harpies. These soon fleeced him of his money, and he went down to a dishonoured grave, his last words being, "Ma brither was ma warst freen'. I wus he hed deed without a ha'penny."

The thriftless manner in which such money is spent has often been observed. But judgment was never passed upon it with more severity than by Robbie Reid, beadle to the late Rev. Mr. Manson of Fyvie Free Church. The legacy that gave Robbie such happiness ran away so easily, that in his old age the worthy beadle found it difficult to provide the suit of clothes that was deemed necessary for the office. On the minister suggesting the advisability of getting such a new dress, and adding that with

his legacy it could not be a matter of difficulty to him, Robbie replied in words that contain axiomatic truth: "That inherited money, sir, is a cheat; it's nae wirth five shillin's i' the poond."

The accumulation of capital can be accomplished in no other way than by saving. Somebody must spend less than he earns. Some one must put off to a future date the enjoyment of things to which he is at present entitled. Unless there be self-sacrifice there can be no wealth, that is; no capital. The only method by which capital can be created, and without which industrial progress is impossible, is that of thrift. Adam Smith and Henry George alike confess this cardinal truth of Economics. The thrifty man is behind the world's progress and the nation's success.

An excellent and careful farmer was one day called upon by a young friend who was fast becoming a waster, and who, in a free-and-easy manner, asked the question, "Hoo did ye manage, Fortrie, to gither sae muckle siller?" The answer of the old farmer was: "Juist because I learnt frae ma gude father fat ye never learnt—tae gither it in bawbees. Tak' ye care o' the bawbees first, an' ye'll sune fin' the wye tae a fortune."

In the sixties and seventies of last century the well-to-do classes had not acquired habits of lavish extravagance, such as are now too common. But in the last three decades increased opportunities of expenditure have been opened up, of which they have availed themselves. The private motor-car is only one of many new ways of increasing enjoyment, as well as of doing larger business at greater speed. Whether it be because of the noise it makes, or of the dust that it raises in the roadway, I cannot tell, but it is a fact that it has tended to increase the jealousy of the poorer classes, and to augment

The bitterness with which they regard the relations between capital and labour. How often on the roadway between the hedges have I heard the exclamation, "Another motor! An' another stour!" I met a poor woman clad in mournings who apologised to me for her appearance. "I'm a' broon wi' dust, an' smored wi' stour. Thae motors are a mighty noosance! They blaad ma washin', and they spile ma flowers. I wuss I cud get a hoose aff the roadside." That feeling to-day is not uncommon. The automobile is a great pleasure to many of us, but there are two sides to the estimation of it—the inside and the outside. The point of view makes all the difference.

But in many other ways the old thrifty habits are being cast aside and a more expensive manner of living is coming in. This is doubtless the necessary result of education, which has brought with it a desire for better houses, neater dress, more time for reading, for social intercourse, and recreation. These are all additions to the enjoyment of life, and it were well if, with this excellent advance in rational pleasures and amusements, there could be combined the habit of living well within one's income, and of laying past something for the rainy day and for old age. Scotland cannot afford to give up its grand old national virtue of thrift.

During a summer holiday I happened to preach in a somewhat remote Banffshire parish which the railways have not reached, where the Scottish accent may be heard in its native purity, and where old habits and thrifty ways are still observed and practised. At the close of the service one of the elders, a fine-looking, white-haired, and splendid specimen of the Scottish farmer, walked to the manse with me, and during a conversation which turned on the great

social changes now taking place among the rural population, he told me the following story, which I wrote down in my notebook that same afternoon. I give it in his own words, though I cannot reproduce the beautiful accent of purest Scottish Doric in which it was spoken.

"I was glad to hear ye say a word, sir, in yer sermon about thrift. It's nae a pop'lar virtue nooadays. We were far mair thrifty when I was young. At ma ain mairriage my wife jist got a new wincey goon, an' I got a jaeket an' new tae-pieces tae ma beets. We were mairret in the minister's study an' walkit hame airm in airm wi' oor freen's tae a quate tea. Nae thriftless throwin' awa' o' siller. But, sir, when the craft grew tae a fairm, an' the fairm grew tae twa fairms, wi' the help o' a thrifty wife, we pit oor son, George, into the second fairm an' said tae him, 'Noo, George, be sure an' get a guid wife, an' tak' a fairmer's dochter, ane that kens a' aboot creamin' milk an' kirnin' butter, an' feedin' the pigs an' the hens.'

"Weel, sir, George cam' back in a fyow weeks an' said, 'Father, I'm gaun tae get a wife.' 'An' wha is't, George?' 'Oh, she's a fine clever wumman, an' I'm shure ye'll like her.' 'But wha is she?' I said. 'Weel,' said George, 'she's jist the ledly's maid frae the Castle.' 'Oh, George, George,' we baith said, 'she winna mak' a gweed wife!' 'Dinna be feart, father,' said George. 'She's clever an' bonnie, an' she's been awa' wi' her mistress ower France an' Italy, an' aiven to Egypt, an' actooaly tae Mount Sinai whaur Moses gied the Law.' 'Weel, but, George,' said his mither, 'she widna get muckle frae Moses aboot creamin' milk an' kirnin' butter.' 'Eh, but, mither,' he said, 'ye'll fin' her rael cliver. At ony rate, it can be nae ither but her.' Weel, sir,"

he continued to me, "ye see what maun be, maun be, an' there's nae eese in fechtin' fowks, so we jist agreed, an' speirt whaur he wad hae the mairriage pairty? 'Weel, father,' said George, 'her mither's hoose is juist a but an' a ben, an' it cudna be there. Ye'll need to gie the mairriage pairty at yer ain hoose.'

"So we hed tae hae the mairriage at oor fairm, an' his mither an' me thocht it wad be juist a quate tea, an' then we wad sen' them hame wi' the mare an' the gig tae their ain hoose. But na, na, sir! Leddy's maids frae the Castle winna hae quate teas. They maun hae denners (with strong accent on the word)—denners—denners! An' it wisna denner she said; it was a lang-nibbit French word I couldna pronoonce that she tauld tae George. It maun be that, an' naething less; so we hed tae gie the denner tae plase her, thriftless craetur'; an' ma wife killt three o' the bonniest hens aboot the place, an' hed tae mak' a' kin' o' puddin's an' jeelies an' jams tae plaise her.

"Weel, up she cam' on the mairriage day wi' ither five weemin frae the Castle, a' dressed in silks an' muslin an' gold chains aboot their necks, an' as braw as the led dy hersel'. We were sair pit pot wi' them, but did oor best, an' thocht we wad june get throu' wi't an' sen' her an' George hame wi' the gig. But eh, sir, led dy's maids frae the Castle winna gang hame that wye. George cam' roun' tae me an' said, 'Father, she's nae gaun hame.' An' I said, 'Whaur ither wad she gang?' 'Oh,' said he, 'she wants tae gang awa' tae a honeymoon.' An' what's a honeymoon?' said I. 'It's a kin' o' tour, father.' 'An' whaur wad she tour till?' I speirt. 'Weel,' said he, 'she wad like tae gang tae see the gran' places—Stirlin', an' Bannockburn, an' Edinboro Castle, an' the Forth Brig, an' syne come



hame.' 'Od,' said I, 'that'll be a five-poon' note, George, I doot.' 'Ay,' said he, 'it'll be a' that, father.' Sae I hed tae gie the puir loon a five-poon' bank-note. An' wi' that, roon' the house comes a cairriage an' a pair they hed ordered to tak' them awa' tae the station, covered wi' ribbons an' bizzoms an' a' chat kin' o' thing. An' up starts thae weemin frae the Castle an' cries tae ma wife, 'Whaur's yer rice, mistress? Bring yer rice.' Oh, sic wasterie! Wad ye believe it, sir, ma wife hed tae bring a bonnie jar o' rice tae them; an' they took it an' threw it a' at the cairriage as they gied awa', till the verra graivel wus white wi't. 'Deed, sir, the only thing about the hale mairriage that plaised me was whaun the cock an' the hens cam' roon' the hoose gable aboot sax o'clock an' picket it a' up an' made a gweed eese o't. I cried tae ma wife, 'Wumman, come here an' see for yersel', the beasts hae mair sense than the buddies, thrifty craturs that they are!' That's the new kin' o' weddin', sir, they a' want nooadays."

I ventured to ask how the marriage turned out, but he shook his head doubtfully, and I begged him to forgive my inquiry, and not heed it. We talked a little on other matters, but he could not keep off the subject. "I maun tell you, sir, hoo it ended," he added. "They hed their tour tae Stirlin' an' the Forth Brig, an' cam' hame agane wi' a cairriage an' pair, an' nae a single plack in George's pooch; a' thing spent in three days. Puir George! He aye spak aboot her bonnie face, an' her bonnie hair, an' her bonnie teeth, an' hoo a'budy admired them. Weel, weel, he kent it a' when he gaed hame." "What can you mean?" I asked. "Weel, sir, George an' her got tae their ain hoose, an' upo' the parlour table there was a big letter lyin', ane o' thae lavyer-like letters wi' big envelopes. 'What can that be?' says George.

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'Just open it,' says she, 'and you'll see.' So wi' a tremmlin' han' he opened the letter; an' juist guess, sir, what it was." I assured him I could not guess, and was afraid even to imagine. "Weel, sir, ye may be feart, an' sae was George; naethin' less, sir, than a big accoont frae an Aiberdeen dentist—saeven poon' ten for bocht teeth! Puir George! Puir George! Whan will folk lairn thrift?"

The thriftless wife of a cadger in Banff was a great trial to her decent husband. She could neither cook porridge nor boil kail, the two wholesome and economical dishes which his mother had always provided for him. He asked me one day to go and counsel his wife to learn how to cook such thrifty dishes and to think of her domestic duties. I found them both at home and cautiously introduced the subject, commending in general terms a frugal and careful wife and a diligent husband. It gave him an opening. "Weel, a' I want is gweed porridge to ma breakfast, an' green kail to ma dinner." "Weel, Donald, I'm sure ye aye get that when ye want it." "Ay, but it's porridge like brochan an' kail like swine's meat." "Weel," said the wife, "if the minister will juist show me the wey I'll dee't." I said I was afraid I could not. "Och, sir, ye'll dee't." "But," I said, "unfortunately neither the prophets nor their followers, the professors at the Divinity halls of the church, ever taught us the secret of making good porridge." "Weel, sir, it was an awfu' want in yer eddication. Ministers should a' ken fu' to mak' porridge and boil greens. It's mair eesfu' till their fowk than makin' sermons." My visit, however, was not in vain. The gentle hint was taken, and the matters of dispute between wife and husband took end by her learning from a neighbour the culinary art so much desired by her gudeman. He became

much pleased with the thrifty habits she latterly formed, and would repeat to me the old saying, "She's a gweed wife, an' her thrift's a gweed revenue."

Somewhat similar in thought is the following: I was preaching one Sunday in Morayshire, and in the evening met and walked with a fine old farmer who had been at the morning service, when I had happened to refer to life's changes. He amplified the subject in fine old Scotch, with many homely illustrations. "I'm glad," he said, "the drinkin's less than it used to be. It was an awfu' vice in my young days that cost mair than mony virtues. It was whisky on Saiturday and whisky on Sunday, mornin' an' night. The fairmers blamed me for ma bonnie green-hoose an' ma flooor beds; but I tell't them their dram-drinkin' cost the siller o' sax greenhouses. They aye wanted me awa' wi' them; but I just said, 'Na, na! the hame an' the hearthstare is gowd's worth. I want nae better company than the wife and the weans.' They were gran' years for the fairmers the sixties and the saeventies, and siller was like slate stanes. But I said to them the tide's nae lang at the flood; it will sune turn, an' the weakest will gang to the wa' then. An' sure it did; an' by the aughties they were creepin' doon to little crafts, an' hed to be behooded to me for help mony a time. It's a God's truth ye said—oor biggest enemy's insid and nae ootside."

And then he added, with a pathos that showed his sincerity, "I dinna care, sir, aboot bidin' owre lang and drammin' at the Elgin market. I'm like the horses, that rax oot and mend their pace when their heids are hameward! East or west, hame's the best. A thrifty, canty wife is gweed revenue; an' a clean quate fireside's mair to me than ony public cud be." I felt he had preached a better

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on some that Sunday evening than I had preached  
m.

Scottish people used to have, and to a large extent still have, a very healthful horror of debt. Their favourite proverbs show the dislike of it; and the frugal character of the people gives encouragement to this antagonism. If they do not say with Shenstone, in his *Essays*, "What pleasure it is to pay one's debts," they do say, "Debt and daffin mak' folk's dormant." They discountenance high living or expensive style by saying, "Ca' canny and flee high"; "better hain (economise) weel than work air." To a similar effect is the proverb, well known in Scotland, "Dinna stretch your airm farther than sleeve 'ill lat ye." It occurs in *The Provost*: "I'll no let ye rest if ye dinna mak' me a bailie's wife or a' be done." I was not ill pleased to hear Mrs. Pawkie so spiritfu'; but I replied, 'Dinna try to stretch your airm, gudewife, farther than your sleeve will let you; we maun ca' canny mony aye yet before we think of dignities.' "

Parents are accustomed in these parts to warn their sons against signing money bills of any kind; and farmers will often quote the saying, "He'll sune be a beggar that canna say 'No,'" the implicit reference being to this weakness which has ruined many a crofter. Somewhat similar is the proverb, "He that tines his siller tines his wit"; for a Scot in business who gets into debt falls heavily in the estimation of his social circle, just as he who rashly risks money is thought to be a fool. In the following the reference is plain and pointed: "Money borrowt is sair sorrowt." "He that spends his gear afore he gets it will hae little guid o't." I believe that another proverb, common in the mouth of many a farmer's wife, refers pathetically to a want of thrift in the kitchen: "It's

easy bakin' beside the meal." There's no difficulty in supplying bread when it has not to be purchased. While the wholehearted hatred of debt finds expression in the proverb, "Leein' rides on debt's back." These are all rugged maxims hewn from Scottish life.

The theme of debt is one that is discussed in every Scottish home. The glorious privilege of being independent is known to be out of reach of every home where debt abides, and so it was in old days hated and hounded out by every means. Would it were so still ! A dissenting minister did his best to evict this enemy. When intimating a special collection in church he said he had been asked the question "whether it would be right for those who were in debt to contribute ?" He replied with an emphatic "No ! But," he added, "I shall on this occasion stand at the plate as you give your offerings on retiring." Strange to say, the offering was of an unusual amount, and all the more as there seemed to be nobody in the congregation who, as suggested, was in trouble about the burden of debt.

The proverb says, "Debt's aye doonhaddin'"; and another common to Banffshire is, "Naethin's cheap that's nae needed." Old Scottish folk had a hearty dread of debt. I have known a crofter on his death-bed speak solemnly to his family on several things, but the main wish was expressed in the words, "My bairns, niver touch debt." His other counsels were akin to this, "Aye be honest, and aye be layin' by something."

## CHAPTER VI

### FISHERMEN IN THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND

WE are all fond of our fishermen and fisherwomen. In many of their ways and habits they are unique, and one must go much among them to know them. But they deserve study. They are kindly, neighbourly, hard working, a fine healthy race, marrying early and rearing for us a splendid young generation of seamen who will yet be the backbone of our Scottish line of defence when the testing day comes, which may not be far distant.

They are possessed of deep feelings, and whatever psychologists may say, with them feeling is the primitive form of consciousness, out of which all their intellectual life develops. Mental effects move only in the periphery of their being. They pulsate with emotion. And though the intensity of the states of feeling is naturally subject to many oscillations, yet as a rule it is along the line of emotion and not on the plane of intellect that they normally move. There are exceptions to this general statement, and I have met men in these villages who have rare judgment and power of grasping ideas. But in general it is as I have said. Their ideas are fused through and through with feeling and receive their decisive stamp thereby.

All their religious observances are also, in a marked degree, coloured by emotion. Here they differ so

widely from the typical Scot, with his ethical theology and intellectual training in Bible truth, as to make them in religion a unique people.

When I first came to know them, the effect of the widespread revival of the sixties was very visible among them. Their talk was full of Biblical phrases : religion seemed to colour their whole life and thought. A great change has taken place within the last thirty or forty years, but among the older folk the conversation is still deeply tinged with religious conviction and feeling. At a marriage where I officiated in 1875, the congratulations of the bridegroom's father and uncles were more like sermons than marriage speeches. The songs were mostly popular hymns, sung with most hearty fervour, such as only fisher folk can show. The whole social sentiment was religious.

Of the various æsthetic emotions they have great pleasure in rhythm. They are very musical, and no congregation in Scotland sings like a fisher congregation. They are fond of bright colours, their doors and windows being always painted in the brightest hues and often with great taste. The feeling of the sublime is also highly developed. But the other pole, the sense of the ludicrous, is conspicuous by its absence. In telling a story of a witty nature about King Edward to a fisherwoman the only remark made was that she feared I was 'worldly-minded.' A humorous speech by a minister at a social meeting was spoken of in my hearing as "just trying to mak' a fule o' the folks."

But the elementary feelings are warm and genuine. They are kind and helpful to one another. A case of severe sickness rouses the sincere sympathy of the whole village. For a death the entire community may be said to go into mourning.

Sometimes this universal sympathy and knowledge of one another's trials has for a stranger an awkward side. On my first visit to a sick woman, who spoke very lovingly about her 'gudeman,' I asked how her husband was getting on at the fishing. "Eh, ma dearie," she said, "dee ye no' ken he's deed." "No; this, you know, is my first visit." "But," she added, "a learnt man like you mith hae kent that whenever ye saw me." "Well, I hope you'll forgive my ignorance," I replied. "Forgie ye? Oh ay; but ministers wi' a feelin' hert shud surely ken a weedow woman when they see her."

One very hot day the minister of Seafield was speaking to some Portknockie fishermen about the benefit of sea-bathing from a sanitary point of view, and urged them to begin it. "And it would afford you," he said, "an opportunity of learning to swim, so very important and useful to all seafaring folks whose calling is so full of dangers. "Won't you begin?" The reply was a decided negative, followed by a doubtful shake of the head. "Na, na! it's ower cauld; and, forbye, it weets a body."

Within the last ten years there has been a great increase in the number of warships in the Moray Firth, consequent on Cromarty being made a naval base. The big gun practice, carried on almost daily during summer off the Banffshire coast, is apt to shake doors and windows in fishing towns and villages around the Firth. At first it brought terror, and even yet the good wives are barely reconciled to it. Speaking of the loud noise made by exploding shells, one Banffshire fishwife said, "I dinna like the look thae warships ava, and I canna bear their cannon. And, fat's mair, oor men tell me the fish dinna like them, and winna spawn near them. If a war wi'



Germany was beginnin', it wad be nae mows." "Yes, it would be a very serious thing for us all," I replied. "Oh, ye needna mind," she said, "your manse is round the hill and ye wadna suffer muckle. But think o' hus. We wad be just blawn to bits and oor verra livin' ta'en frae's. The fish wadna stand it, and wad a' leave the Moray Firth. An' the gaun awa' o' the fish wad be far waur than the comin' o' the Germans."

The fishermen study the weather closely; it is all-important in their dangerous calling. And they are often consulted in consequence regarding it. One morning the old rector of the burgh was walking out the road, and meeting a fisherman, John Slater, he asked, "What d'ye think the weather is to be like to-day, John?" With a sly twinkle of the eye John replied, "Weel, sir, I'm nae a scholar, ye ken, but if ye wait till evenin' I'll be mair able tae tell ye without mistak'."

This John Slater was an exception to the general rule I have spoken of above. He simply bubbled over with humour and jokes. Sometimes he would blunder into a good Irish bull, as when, speaking of the epidemic of diphtheria that visited Banff in 1883, he said, "I kenna what this difftheery can be. It's juist like witchcraft. There are folks deein' at this time that niver deed afore within ma knowledge."

One day I was having a very happy talk with John near the Banff harbour, where he was busy building a small boat. In idle times he often employed himself in this way. Somehow the conversation turned on the different ways in which we may serve God, and I referred to the first question in the Shorter Catechism. John clinched it finely by saying, "Ay, ay, sir, ye gloriffee God in preachin' a sermon, and

I gloriffee God in 'biggin' a boat, and I winna ventur tae say which o's dis't best."

Even in his last illness and rather lonely death-bed, where I loved to see him (though he was not a parish church man), he still overflowed with humour. Even then something of the nature of a bull would appear, as this: "If I only kent o' a place whar sickness and death nivver cam' I wad gang and *end ma days there*."

In one of his illnesses he was for some months in our Chalmers' Hospital. Being very fond of tobacco, John found the prohibition of smoking a very burdensome restriction, and against orders would go out of his warm ward to indulge his taste. But after a time he became such a favourite that, by the unanimous vote of the ward patients (as he told me), he was permitted to have his pipe. Speaking to me as a visiting trustee, he said, "The trustees are gweed men and mak' gweed rules. But ye canna mak' a net that'll haud a' the fish. And, ye see, ye dinna ken a' thing. I can see ye dinna ken the hail truth aboot tobawka. It disna grow in your kailyaird. Nae man's fit to be a joodge o' smokers unless he smoke. I can aisy be withoot a dram, but I canna be withoot a draw." I lately heard a distinguished editor of a leading London journal say the same thing in my study in nearly the same words, only his language was not so fragrant of the soil and of the sea as John's was.

A good man, a Plymouth Brother, very kindly visited the sick in a Banffshire fishing village and read the Scriptures with them. On one occasion, meeting an old fisherman at his door, he asked him how they all were. The answer was, "We're a' as ordinar' excep' masel' and Peter; Peter's got his leg broken, and he's nae like to get owert." After

some neighbourly talk the good man took an affectionate farewell of the fisherman, and said he would not forget them in his prayers at the throne of grace, and would certainly remember Peter. The old fisherman was much astonished, but politely thanked his friend, saying, "I'm muckle obleeged for yir kind words aboot me, and especially aboot Peter, for it's the first time I ever heerd o' a dog bein' prayed for." The pious man was taken aback. "Isn't Peter one of your boys?" "Oh na," said the old man, "Peter's oor dog, and a gweed creetur he is. Dinna tak' back yir prayer for Peter."

Fishermen are not very fond of writing letters when away from home on their many sailings. But they make up for their silence by a liberal use of the telegraphic wires. Many telegrams come from Yarmouth to Banff in good Scotch, and are sometimes, owing to their contracted form, full of unconscious humour. One young husband wired to his wife news of his well-being and also a request for clothes in the following laconic terms: "Gettin' on weel here but want washin'." But however much he may have wanted a good wash, the telegram was not misunderstood, and the clean clothes went up by parcel post. Another young man wired his sweetheart about a loving gift in the following ambiguous language: "Grammophone would hae been sent but nae weel." The sick instrument soon came and was found to be in quite a healthy condition.

But though a believer in telegraphic communications the fisherman is not yet assured as to the privacy of marconigrams. In their present inchoate stage of development they do not seem to him capable of conveying confidential communications to the partner of his cares. When, some time ago, the

cable between Shetland and Aberdeenshire was broken, recourse was had to the Mareoni installation with much success. But an old fisherman, who desired to telegraph home, was very loath to make use of this new scientific instrument for the conveyance of his good wishes. All that he would consent to going into the Marconi transmitter was: "The cable's broken and I'll just wait till it's mended to gie ye the news." The wife, however, drew her own conclusions, and the marconigram effected its purpose in quieting her apprehensions as to the safety of dear ones.

During the late war among the Balkan States, in which Greece found herself involved, two Banffshire salmon-fishers were talking together in the bothy where they are wont to enjoy a quiet nap after their midday meal. The one asked the other, "What's this Salonika they're a' speakin' about? The minister said he hed seen't. What is't?" "Hoot, Dugald, man," said the other, "dinna disturb ma nappie wi' yer releegious questions. The Shorter Catechiz will tell ye a' that."

The late Dr. Duguid of Buckie knew the Moray Firth fishermen intimately and was a great favourite among them. He was largely instrumental in getting the new and handsome parish church built in Buckie. Being a strong supporter of the national church, he sometimes came into collision with those of other denominations among the fisher people. On one occasion he was calling professionally on an old fisherwoman, of strong Plymouthistic views, who said, "Eh, doctor, what do ye think o' this awfu' thing?" "I've heard nothing; what is it?" demanded the witty doctor. "Oh, I just dreamed last night, and I saw a great big black hole richt in front o' the Auld Kirk door, an' smoke comin' oot."

What think ye o' that, noo, doctor ? " Oh," said the doctor, with a flash of wit, " you remember what David says in the 40th Psalm :

" ' He took me from a fearful pit,  
And from the miry clay,  
And on a rock he set my feet,  
*Establishing my way.* ' "

It was an argument for Establishment of a somewhat dubious character, but the wit on the one side met the dream on the other side for the time being.

I am indebted to a member of my own congregation for the following story relating to a seaside village not far from Banff. A fisherman and his wife had had a serious difference of opinion involving strong language, and the husband resorted to forceful methods of impressing his views upon his partner in life, with the result that the home threatened to be broken up. To prevent this and to restore peace the minister was sent for. He promptly took the good wife's part, and proceeded to show to the husband how much he had erred in his language and conduct. " And, John," he concluded, " do remember that your wife, as the Bible says, is the weaker vessel." " Weel, sir," John replied, " gin she be the weaker vessel she shud cairry the laigher sail." The reply took the wind completely out of the minister's sails, for it was the utterance of perfect seamanship.

In the north of Scotland there are some family names which predominate in certain districts. In consequence of so many boys and girls of one name (as Duncan, Macgregor, Mackay) being at the old parish school, it was the custom in former days to call them (as their fathers would be called) by the name of the farms from which they came. At Ordiqhill school fifty years ago the Duncans out-

numbered all the rest. Accordingly the children from Swillibog would be known as Davie Swilly, Jeannie Swilly, Katie Swilly. Those from Bogside as Jeannie Bogie, Mary Bogie. In another parish the Macgregors who came from Balthangie were known as Jock Thangie and Andrew Thangie. Their fathers at the kirk and market were invariably designated by the name of the farm. In my young days at Stonehaven, David Straton of Farrochie was always called Farrochie, and Mr. Milne of Auquharie was unknown to us by any appellation but 'Auquharie. In Banffshire markets to-day farmers address each other as 'Touks,' 'Brangan,' 'Rettie,' 'Braeside,' 'Quarryhill,' 'Knockorth,' 'Ordens,' 'Balthangie' 'Sandlaw,' 'Tipperty.'

Among fishermen on the north-east coast, where the patronymics are few, a habit of giving 'tee' names originated in necessity. Where there are six John Mairs, without the tee name the postman would not know to whom a letter was to be handed. No doubt the numbering of houses in the fishing villages now helps 'postie' very much. But still the tee names are useful for distinction's sake, and are universally adopted among the people themselves. To-day, on the Banffshire coast, there are families of Mair Bo, Mair Bobbin, Mair Findlay; families of Wood Doo, Wood Park, Wood King; and others of Cowie Skipper, Cowie Dodle,\*etc. Since the introduction of steam-drifters, now so rapidly replacing the zulu boat in the herring fishing, a custom is creeping in of designating the particular family by the steamboat which the father owns: Cowie o' the *Skylark*, West o' the *Morning Star*, Slater o' the *White Heather*, Slater o' the *Boyndie Burn*, Slater o' the *Prospective*, Wood o' the *Gaveny Brae*, Wood o' the *Ruby Gem*, Wood o' the *Productive*, Wood o' the

*Pansy*, Wilson o' the *Elegant*, Wilson o' the *Lustre Gem*, Falconer o' the *Research*, Falconer o' the *Forglen*, Falconer o' the *Scots Greys*. This custom will probably continue, since more and more the fortunes of the Moray Firth fishermen are being bound up with steam fishing vessels.

In consequence of this same fact the wide world is now becoming the fisherman's home. For not only does he ply his calling on English and Irish coasts, but also in the winter season the younger men join ships and make acquaintance with the harbours of Europe and America. These men will lose their local characteristics and become citizens of the world. So far as that takes place, we shall miss from our community a type of character which at present is unique and which possesses some very attractive qualities

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CAMP AND ITS MUSIC

THE annual camps at Dornoch, Burghead and other places round the Moray Firth afforded a very happy outing to the old volunteers, now converted into territorials. At one of these camps near the seashore, in 1896, a sergeant was going the rounds at night to see that all lights were extinguished. Through the canvas of one tent he thought he saw a blaze of light, and instantly shouted, "That licht maun gang oot." The men inside woke up and he repeated to them his orders. The reply came, "A' richt, sergeant, you've mista'en the moone's licht for the lamp." The sergeant did not accurately hear the reply, and retorted, "I dinna care what licht it is ; oot it maun gang if I'm sergeant here."

When chaplain to the 42nd Regiment in Egypt for a short time, in room of one who had died, I met many of the wounded soldiers who had faced the Mahdi's hordes. I asked one of the old veterans from Speyside how he felt when the battle at Old Dongola, in which he was wounded, seemed to be turning against them. Donald was not very willing to answer, saying he was in the rear and did not see much of the actual engagement. "But," he added, "I wass shure we wad thrash them ; but I wass not shure that we wadna be all killt afore we did it."



Hector Macdonald, from Dingwall, who afterwards became so distinguished, was then at the front. He was a universal favourite, beloved of the Egyptian troops and adored by the Scottish soldiers. Hector was a typical officer. On horseback he was the most knightly looking man that I ever saw in the saddle. He was also very considerate of all the soldier's needs, and to any representation in their behalf by the chaplain he was all attention and kindness. His loving smile and sympathetic tone were in fine contrast with the steely eye and the hard face of Kitchener.

When the troops returned home from Khartoum I met many of them about Banff and Nairn. Every one declared that it was Hector that really gained the battle of Omdurman. It was won in the morning and again practically lost in the afternoon, when the vast hordes of the Mahdi, hidden by the western rising ground, suddenly showed themselves on the British flank. General Kitchener had left in order to enter Khartoum, supposing the battle was all but over. The real fight then took place at and after midday. And the soldiers affirmed that, but for Hector's handling of his men in that flank attack, assisted by Wauchope and Lewis, the day had been lost and a victory converted into a terrible defeat. Every military tactician was loud in praise of Hector's management of his men as he stood in the very cockpit of the fight.

One poor young fellow who belonged to Cromarty came down to us at the first Cataract. He was very ill of ague, which, in fact, invalided far more men than the actual fighting did, and in his illness he got very home-sick. He was constantly speaking of Scotland and the Black Isle, and during the hot weather he longed to get "juist ae breath o' the

caller air o' Cromarty." Hector Macdonald heard of him, and sent a very kind message, bidding him bear up "and he would yet one day himself take him back to the Black Isle." "Hector's a prick," said the sick man; "he's a rael prother. He kent the verra soond o' the Black Isle would do me goot." To-day Hector's monument stands on the hill above Dingwall, and the whole Black Isle from Cromarty to Ferintosh can see the fine proportions of the noble column.

A story is often told of Hector Macdonald and his kindness to the Celt. He was living at an hotel in the north of Scotland, with Lady Macdonald and his son, when an old Highlander of the same name heard of their presence in the district. He, poor fellow, was in great distress, for the term was near and he had not a shilling with which to pay his rent. He set off at once to call on his famed kinsman, for all Macdonalds claim to be kindred, and introduced himself. "So you're a Macdonald also," said the General. "Yess," was the reply, "an' there's lots o' Macdonalds in Sutherland whaur I come frae; there's Tugald Macdonald, an' Angus Macdonald, an' Colin; an' ferry kind too is Colin, an' ferry liberal wi' hiss money, an' yer honour hess the ferry look ov Colin, an' micht be hiss prother." The appeal reached ready ears, and the problem of the rent was solved.

The bagpipes still provide the favourite music in Upper Banffshire and on Speyside. They sound sweetest when one is at some distance. In a calm summer evening when the music floats across a mountain valley it is very entrancing. But no one knows the real power of the bagpipes until he has gone abroad with his regiment to a foreign land and heard them call him out to duty there. Only

once or twice, in minor engagements with marauding bands of Sudanese down the river, did I hear the sudden summons of the bugle. And then, when the men began to march out and the pipes started to play "The March of the Cameron Men," then it was that they stirred the blood of every Scotchman and made it tingle to the very finger-tips. Every man from the Highlands seemed to be in that moment of time transformed. I observed lads who were naturally lazy, and far from manly, in an instant lifted up into the heroic. Well did they know that some of them might never return, or might come back with bodies gashed and shattered. But when the pipes played, and the music of the homeland entered their soul, they stepped out in the spirit of new men, the head high, the body erect, the step firm, the muscles taut, eager only to get at the enemy, and ready to run every risk of life or limb for the honour of old Scotland. No one can know the power of patriotism as an inspiration to action until he has gone out with the men, has heard the call of the pipes, and felt the rush of the heart's blood through his pulses as he marches to their martial music. On such an occasion the sentiment of patriotism is simply overwhelming. It is an experience that has to be gone through in order to be understood.

A young officer in Morayshire told me that, when he first saw a company of Seaforths entraining from Fort George for the Boer War, and heard the pipes play them off, the thought of staying at home and taking no part in the strife made him 'positively sick.' He simply could not help it, but went off at once and begged permission to resign a lucrative post and leave for the seat of war. "The pipes kindled a fever in my very blood," he said, "and I

had no rest until I reached Southampton and got aboard the trooper on the tide."

Every one knows Dr. Johnson's fine saying, "That man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona." I have stood at Marathon's circular mound and looked upon the lovely pile of Iona, now restored, and I have felt the appeal of both of them. But still I must acknowledge that for the stirring of the blood and the inspiring of patriotic sentiment, nothing can compare with the call of the bagpipes and the memory of those bright mornings with Scottish troops on the banks of the sunny Nile, when we marched out to meet an enemy and knew not which of us might fall.

I have been told by friends from Canada that in certain districts where Highlanders are numerous they avoid the pipes lest the music should fairly overcome the Gael and create a home-sickness of the most painful kind. When I was assistant in the Barony, Dr. Norman MacLeod told me that he himself sat down and cried as he listened to the wailing notes of "Lochaber No More," played on the bagpipes while they were sailing across one of the Canadian lakes.

An aged woman from Mull, who worshipped in the Barony, was dying in Glasgow. I attended her sickbed, but she longed to get a visit from Norman. When I told him of her great desire, he made it his duty to see her and to speak to her in Gaelic. After prayer she said she had just one wish more, and it was to hear a pibroch before she died. Dr. MacLeod took care that her wish was gratified. She said to the piper who played the pibrochs, "They bring back Mull and its

bonnie hills, and it mak's me think o' the gates o' heaven."

Another story, brought by Dr. MacLeod from Canada, was of a Highlander in Ottawa who, on the edge of a large forest, was dining on salted beef, when suddenly he found himself surrounded by wolves who had scented the food and had determined to have a share of it. In his terror Donald threw them bits of flesh, which they instantly devoured. When it was all done, and their eyes still gleamed upon him, he seized his beloved pipes that lay beside him and began to play what he thought might be his funeral dirge. What was his surprise to find that the wolves fled in every direction at the unusual sound! "Och," cried Donald, "gin I had kent that ye liket the pipes sae weel, I wud hae gaen you a pibroch *afore* yer supper!"

It is one of the most puzzling paradoxes connected with the north of Scotland that the very people who are so devoted to the pipes have for generations opposed the use of instrumental music in their churches. To-day there are some parts of the Highlands—they are growing fewer every year—where an organ is regarded as wholly unsacred. Occasionally even the pipes are deemed very secular. A story comes from Ross-shire of a Free Kirk elder who, angry with a man for playing the pipes in the street, abruptly asked him the first question in the Shorter Catechism, "What is the chief end of man? Can ye gie me it?" The piper thought he was being asked for a new tune, and in his innocence he replied, "No, I dinna hae that tune, but if ye'll whistle 't ower to me I'll try to play it for ye."

Laggan is the very heart and core of the Highlands, and its mountain scenery is unrivalled in Britain. I was only once there, but can never forget how in

the evening the whole valley of the Spey seemed to be filled with pipe music from end to end. It echoed back, too, from the grand precipice of Craigellachie, and so added to the enchantment. A Londoner whom I met could not contain himself. "I wish," said he, "I could bring London to Laggan and make them hear this! They would then understand why the Scotch love their hills and why the London Scottish are so fond of their pipers. I did not believe it before; but Laggan has converted me."

An old Highlander with his bagpipes was playing in the front of a lovely villa in the county town of Moray. Donald had seen better days, but a broken arm had caused him the loss of his work and wage, and cruel misfortune sent him out to the wide world with his pipes and his kilt as his only possessions. The owner of the villa passed him by, throwing at him the query, "Why did you not stay in the Highlands among your own folk?" "Juist because," was the reply, "I thocht the folks here didna aften hear the pipes, an' I cud do them goot py pringin' them something that wad lift their speerits a wee pit nearer heaven."

Another Highlander had been playing his pipes for a whole hour in the square of Keith for little fee, when a pompous merchant went past, and somewhat brusquely addressed the piper in the words, "It seems to pay to blaw yer wind through your chanter." Somewhat hotly Donald replied, "It's no ma wind but ma verra soul I plaw throw the pipes. An' if yer honour hed ony soul ye wad hae kent that at aince."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE KIRK IN THE NOR' EAST

THE kirk has not the place it once occupied in the community in Scotland. In the seventh and first part of the eighteenth centuries the kirk was the centre of light and leading to the parish, and the kirkyard crack gave the farmer the news. Life was then more lonely. There was less communication between families. The sense of solidarity had not possessed the nation, but the parish was one and was all-sufficient. And the kirk created a bond and gave a sense of unity which supplied a very valuable link in social no less than in ecclesiastical life.

To-day this is largely changed. The newspaper enters every home and brings the world's news within reach of all. Every one can read. The circulating library sends out its entertaining volumes. And the Church has ceased to be what for centuries it was, a centre of education, of social culture, and kindly feeling.

But the Church of God will never cease to have her own proper place and function in the community. She will always be a vital spiritual force; she will always keep the holy fire burning, and offer her gospel of salvation to the sinful. As long as men need Christian brotherhood, and are convinced of the duty of Christian worship, they will seek after

her and find help in her ordinances. And they who most deeply feel their weakness and need of guidance by an Infinite Wisdom will never require to be entreated to enter her gates.

To-day the kirk has many critics who delight to find out her faults and expose her weaknesses. But for most people the pursuit of ideals is far more helpful than the exposing of faults. Plato's *Republic* is infinitely better reading than the complaining reviews of a prurient press. For the Church offers a gospel, and with it a power which are most helpful influences in the formation of strong character. If she has lost some patronage and influence, she has made other gains of a more enduring kind. She is giving far more attention to her services and her sacraments. She is multiplying both, as she had need to do. And the tides of humanity will again flow in her favour. But she has still a work of education to do in Scotland in teaching the true spirit of Christianity and in promoting unity among the divided sects.

To the Lord's Table many in the Nor' East go with a reverence which in some cases amounts to unworthy fear. It is the result of long years of teaching which was still less worthy of Presbyterianism. In 1887 I took part in the dispensation of the holy ordinance at Thurso. The minister of the parish, Rev. Stewart Miller, actually had to invite once and again, and finally to implore the people to come to the empty Table. After a considerable time, very slowly arose the leading elder and his wife and took their seats, followed after a pause by a few others. To this small number, called the first Table, the sacred rite was dispensed. Then to a second Table, after still more exhortation and the singing of many verses of a psalm, came some



twenty others ; and a like number to a third Table. To each Table addresses were given both before and after communicating. The whole service occupied four hours.

Some years afterwards, at the request of the Highland Committee, and during the minister's illness, I dispensed the Communion at Dingwall. On the Saturday, after a preparatory service, the elders agreed that we should have but one Table on the morrow. The benefit to all was apparent. But at the end of the sermon, as a protest against this "innovation," an old lady rose and left the church. The old custom of five Tables, universal in large churches in my boyhood in Kincardineshire, is now a thing of the past.

For many years, with the full consent of the kirk-session, I have been in the custom of dispensing the Sacrament in private to aged invalids unable to attend at church. This is felt to be a great boon. But in the Highlands it is not as yet common, though in some parts it is being introduced.

In the summer of 1913 I was living for a few weeks in Inverness-shire, and was temporarily discharging the duties of the parish minister, who was on the Continent. In the course of the short period a very worthy and eminent minister, who had retired from his parish in old age, grew seriously ill, and I had the melancholy privilege of attending him upon his dying bed. Two days before the end, he, though scarcely able to speak, indicated his desire to have the Communion dispensed to him, to which I readily agreed. But such dispensation of this comforting and confirming ordinance was thought by the elders, in the absence of the minister, to be out of the question ; and after consultation it was deemed wiser to refrain from administering

to the dying servant of the Lord. Next day, when I called, he had a plate of bread before him as he sat up in bed. Without uttering a word of complaint, he silently engaged in prayer, consecrated the bread, and slowly and reverently put it to his lips. In the evening of the following day he died. And the Church of Scotland lost one of the best and truest of her sons. Yet he was a true son of the mist. He had all the characteristics of the Highlander, the fervid imagination, the kindling fire, the quick adaptability, and the variable moods of the Celt, and all sweetened and mellowed by a deep religious spirit. He dearly loved the Highlands, and spent his last years among its hills. Almost the last words I heard him utter on his dying bed were a hope that their divisions would cease, and that they might soon be found again within a united and national church.

With many other religious customs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries 'pirrlicueing' has come to an end. It was the finish to the lengthy services connected with celebration of the Lord's Supper. In the north of Scotland that ordinance was celebrated usually but once a year, and in the eighteenth century sometimes not so frequently. Even to the middle of the nineteenth century two preparation days were quite frequent, and the thanksgiving Monday was a high day, the ministers who had assisted all returning to take some part in the church service, and then to dine at the manse. At the close of the church service, however, it was customary for the parish minister, who, of course, had heard all the 'preachings,' to ascend the pulpit and review the services, and summarise the teaching which the people had heard on successive days. This was called 'pirrlicueing.' I heard the late Dr. Brander of

Duffus do it in an inimitable style on a Monday forenoon. I believe he took much trouble to prepare himself for it, and his summary of the doctrinal teaching seemed to be very impressive, as it certainly was instructive. The people relished it, and it was a feature of the old Communion seasons that one feels regret in parting with.

At the close of a busy mission week in Galashiels, in which I took part, the late Dr. Hunter did the same thing, and it was very effective. At the forenoon service, on the following Sunday, he 'pirrlie-cued' the whole fourteen addresses of the mission week, and the people expressed their thanks in unstinted terms. Neither of these Doctors of Divinity made use of notes: as an exercise in memory it was remarkable. There are few to-day that would attempt it.

#### CATECHISING IN THE NORTH

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries parish ministers were accustomed to hold diets of catechising at various points in the parish. I find in the church records of Banff such entries as these: "Catechising at Mill of Banff, 30; at Inchdrewer, 33; at Whiteoutie, 55; at Blairshimnoch, 20; at Cowdenknowes, 26." Questions in the Shorter Catechism were asked and answered, and many of the Bible stories were repeated, to the edification of all. Many stories are told of these meetings, some interesting and pathetic, others amusing and even ludicrous. At one of them the minister asked the farmer's wife, who was a little deaf, "Tell me who made you?" She thought he asked "who made yon?" And as his face was towards the newly made cheeses on the shelf, she blithely answered, "I'll send you a

kebbuck (cheese) the morn, sir, wi' richt gude will." The people in the kitchen burst out laughing, but the minister saved the situation and at the same time secured his gift by replying, "I would be glad to get a' my questions answered like that."

A catechising was taking place at a farm on the banks of the Ythan in Aberdeenshire. After the minister had asked several questions at the children and young farm servants, he turned to the farmer and his clever wife and asked the former, "Now, Mr. Maitland, you will tell us all about Eden; what was foolish in Adam?" "Doin' the deil's biddin'," was the reply. "And noo, you'll tell us, Mrs. Maitland, what was wise about Adam?" "Doin' his wife's biddin'," was the instant retort. A story similar in respect of the quick answer and the theme is told of the famous Rev. Ralph Erskine.

At a catechising near Banff the minister had given a short address on the lessons of Samson's life, and then continued what was called the diet by asking questions about the history of the Judges. Finding them a little backward he returned to the theme of his discourse, and with the assurance of getting correct answers asked a young woman, "Now what was Samson's mistake?" "Tellin' Delilah to cut his hair." "And what," he asked, "should he have done?" "Cutit Delilah's hair," was the quick reply of the feminine mind.

Dean Ramsay tells of a farmer's wife somewhat perplexed by being asked the question in the Shorter Catechism, "What are the decrees of God?" "Oh," she said, "He kens that best Himsel'." It was perhaps as wise an answer as could have been given.

In the parish of Banff one of the catechising diets was always held by Rev. Francis Grant at Boghead, in the Ord. On one occasion he asked of a woman,

whose youth had been blighted by her lover's sudden and painful death, the question (which he deemed an easy one), "Who died for you?" He was astounded by the singular answer, "Awa' wi' yer haverin' and yer drollerie! But for a' that ye think, minister, there was ance a lad that did lay sick for me."

At one of the catechisings held by the late Dr. Todd of Alvah he asked a crofter from Maunderlea what was the fourth commandment. The crofter could not recall the exact words, but gave the sense. "The fourth commandment for a crofter is—Toil and lawbour the hale week frae mornin' tae nicht, and then rest a' the Sawbath day." At the close of the diet the polite minister kindly said, 'You are all good scholars, and you've all done very well.' The crofter's conscience smote him and he added, "So ye say, Dr. Todd, but ye ocht tae hae said, 'a'body except John Steele o' Maunderlea.'"

The same worthy clergyman would frequently conjoin, for the benefit of the old people, the preaching of a short sermon with the catechising of the young. One day at Craigiehillock a very aged female parishioner was present at the preaching, who all through attended closely to the Doctor's exposition of Scripture, while her fingers were busy at the weaving of a stocking. She had a very lazy brother, who at the close of the diet came with his sister to make some complaint about his croft. "Jeems," said the minister, "I wish you were as eident as your sister here; she never missed a loop o' her stocking nor yet a word o' my sermon—a grand example to ye, Jeems." She added, by way of apology, "I promised the stockin's afore Monday, an' I wasna willin' either tae miss the sermon or loase the worth o' ma stockin'."

The question of reunion in one great national church has for years been pressing itself upon the attention of all the people in Scotland. The Kirk of the Reformation has failed to be a united family. Ecclesiastical feuds have riven her into many sections of Presbyterians, until the spirit of division could no further go. But now, in view of the great mass of irreligion and of secularism which stands in hostility to all the churches, a revulsion against this schismatic action has sprung up. The waste of men and of money, more especially in the north of Scotland, has become a crying evil. The country has been harried by divisions and disruptions and is thoroughly tired of them ; it cries for peace and longs for union in one strong, brotherly Church of Scotland.

The scandal is even more patent to the visitor from other lands than to the native Scot. The story is well known of the English commercial traveller who asked his driver, on looking back on a county town, with its many church spires, whether so many churches in such a small place meant that the people were very religious, and got the reply, " Na, sir, it's nae religion, it's just curstness."

Still more does this evil strike the stranger from non-Christian lands. A few years ago there came to Aberdeen Mrs. Chang, niece of the present President of the Republic of China, Yuan-Shih-Kai. She and her young husband were well known in the north of Scotland. They came, both very young, to reside for two winters near Aberdeen University, where the husband attended classes in law, science, and logic. Both were keen observers of national manners ; and they were no less interested in the creeds and the ritual of the churches.

After they had lunched with one of the professors, Mrs. Chang drove with that gentleman's sister round

the west end of Aberdeen, studded thickly with churches. "What is that church, Miss D.?" "It's a Parish Church." "And do they worship the one God?" "Yes, certainly." "And what is this church over the way?" "A United Free Church." "And do they worship the one God?" "Yes." "But why do they not worship Him together in one temple? How strange that they need two temples! We in China worship all in one temple, though we may have many idols."

The drive extended up the banks of the lovely Dee, beyond Cults, and the varied scenery, wooded hills, and castellated mansions that adorn Deeside were much admired by Mrs. Chang. Standing out at one point, in striking contrast, were the humble parish kirk of Banchory-Devenick and the beautifully ornamented chapel of Blair's Roman Catholic College. "And do these people both worship one God?" she asked. "Yes." "And do they not worship together?" "Oh no!" "How very strange! We in China are before you in Scotland." The rebuke was felt to be unanswerable, and the only possible explanation was given. Scottish dourness had created a wintry atmosphere, which, however, has become intolerable and must soon yield to the warmer influences of the approaching spring-time of reunion.

An elder in Peterhead was one dark winter evening standing at the door of his church when a lady approached to drop her offering into the church plate and asked, "Is the minister himself to preach to-night?" "Na," said the elder, "he's awa' frae hame." "And who takes his place?" asked the lady. "Weel," said the elder, with a peculiarly exalted voice, "I dinna ken wha's to preach, but I ken my dochter's to play the harmonium at the singing. Gang in, my lady, gang in."

A clerical probationer in former years lived in Banffshire and eked out his living by supplying vacancies in the various Presbyterian churches. Though a man of piety he was not endowed with too much common sense, and as age came on it seemed to grow less. The one feature of his early life, of which he never tired speaking, was his university training. He told every one of how he had in his youth been at two different colleges, and had sat under many distinguished professors, of whom he spoke as very intimate friends. A farmer, untrained in university subjects, but a man of much wisdom and good sense, said to me one day, "He's been at twa colleges, pur man, but he hasna cairriet muckle o't awa' frae them. He's juist like a calf I aince hed. I keepit it sookin' at twa coos an' it throve weel, but the mair it sookit the bigger a calf it grew."

A young minister, recently elected to a parish, was apt to use technical and theological words in his sermons which were not understood. An old elder was requested to approach him on this subject and suggest the omission of the sesquipedalian adjectives. He did so, venturing to say, "We are a' simple folks here, sir, and like the auld words we a' ken." The young gentleman asked what the words were, and the elder could only remember one which had occurred frequently at the previous Sunday service—the word 'desiderated.' He resolved, however, before complying with the elder's request, to ask an old woman, who was very friendly to him, whether she knew the meaning of the word. "Oh ay," said she, "brawly do I ken it. It's some kin' o' a foreign beast, an' it's a muckle mou'fu' o' a word, sir, an' we a' like to hear it." I fear that the flattery of the old body prevailed against the honest kindness of the elder.



An elder from the north, who was an honest barber went up some years ago to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. His minister was most anxious to hear how he had enjoyed it, and paid him a visit very soon after his return to the burgh town where he exercised his trade. "And hoo did ye lik the Assembly, Andrew? Wasna there gran' speakin yonder?" asked he. "Weel," said his elder, "th' speakin' wasna baad; but that didna impress m muckle. Fat impressed me maist was the great lo o' ministers and young elders that had shaven faces." "Deed, Andrew, I wad never hae thocht o' that," said the former. "Eh, sir, but ye're nae in the trade Yon Edinburry maun be a gran' place for barbers."

An unfortunate phrase came into use in Scotland when first the national church began before 1840 to build chapels in populous districts remote from the parish church. These buildings passed under the designation of Chapels of Ease. A minister was preaching in one of these humble buildings from the text, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion; but troubled, ye careless ones." One of his hearers fell sound asleep despite the preacher's earnest tone and excellent discourse, and his snoring so annoyed a neighbour who was profiting by the sermon that he touched the sleeper gently, saying, "Wauken up man, an' listen. It's a gran' text, 'Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.'" "Weel," said the somnolent brother slowly, "this maun be a contrairy place; is it no' a chaiple o' ease?"

There's a good story told in Strathbogie Presbytery but I have not been able to trace it to its native parish, and it appears in different versions. The correct version is, I believe, in the following terms. The old long-handled ladles for receiving the people's offerings were then in use, and it was very difficult to

the elders to do their duty, in collecting the offering, without coming into collision with worshippers sitting behind them. An addition had recently been made to the eldership, and the new men felt awkward at this work. On the Sunday following the ordination two of them were appointed to collect the offering. One of them performed his duty with much readiness and skill, to the admiration of that part of the congregation. The other was exceedingly nervous and blundered badly. He passed by one seat; in the second he presented the ladle with the bottom upwards to a farmer, who quietly laid his copper on to it. He then endeavoured to collect from an empty pew, to his own great confusion and the amusement of the onlookers and even of the minister who could not help making observations. He and the farmers all met in the Huntly market the following week, when much chaffing took place. The poor fellow, the jibe of all the jesters, got a little angry and blurted out the truth, "Deil tak' him for deein' better than me. Did he no' practeese for a hale fortnicht amo' the nowt i' the byre wi' a fork handle and a neep on the end o't?"

In a parish church in the centre of Buchan, the minister, who was ill, procured a licentiate from Aberdeen to conduct the service. After it, one of the elders called at the manse to ask for the clergyman's health. "How did ye like the preacher?" he asked; "I should think he must be an interesting speaker." "I had nae diffeeculty in followin' yon nan," said the elder, "na, nane, an' I cud cairry on twa trains o' thocht a' the time." "Well," replied the minister, "if he was easily understood I am sure it was his own, and that's always good." "Owe ay," replied the cynical farmer, "I've nae doot it a' cam' bot o' his ain heid, I dinna doot that. But it was

aisy followin' yon man an' thinkin' yer ain thochts a' the time."

The late Rev. John Murker of Banff told many a good story. On one occasion he was performing a marriage ceremony in Macduff, and asked the mother of the bride to kindly bring him a Bible from which he might read the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. A hurried but lengthy search was made for the sacred volume in various drawers and rooms. At last the sister of the bride triumphantly produced it, and as Mr. Murker opened the book there dropped on the floor at the bride's feet a pair of spectacles. The mother of the bride could not contain herself, and suddenly exclaimed, "Gweedsake! ma bonnie glesses that I hinna seen for sax years."

The minister of St. Ninians, Stirling, encountered the same difficulty in the visitation of a sick parishioner, who bade her girl look "for the Buik on the tap o' the aum'ry, and bring't tae the minister." The girl, however, could not find it; whereupon the mother added, "Preserve me, it maun be thereabouts, for we had it at the time o' the flittin'." "And when did you flit?" said the minister. The reply was given without foresight of the inference that might be drawn: "Ay, let me see—it will be nine years come Beltane."

A friend of mine had a similar experience at a funeral. An old and tattered volume was produced, with many apologies by the lady, who said, "You see, our Bibles all lie in the church seat!"

Among the parishes of Upper Donside one often hears an old rhyme about a famous Fast-Day sermon which provokes much mirth. The history of it is as follows: A popular young preacher in the beginning of the nineteenth century was ordained to the parish of Huntly, where he exercised a very healthful influence during his ministry. In those days, when a

new minister arrived, the neighbouring manses, in order to make his acquaintance, asked him to officiate on the summer Fast Day previous to the celebration of the Holy Communion. In this way he became acquainted with the ministers and the people of the whole Presbyteries of Alford and Strathbogie. They liked him and his preaching very much, but on talking together discovered, somewhat to their surprise, that at each service he had preached upon 2 Kings iv. 3, containing the story of Elisha bidding the poor widow of the prophet borrow empty vessels that he might miraculously increase her oil, and so pay her debts. After he had preached the same excellent sermon in some eighteen parishes, a clerical wag in the Presbytery of Alford composed the following lines. They have appeared in different forms, but I give them in the most extended form in which I got them from my now deceased friend Major-General Sir Alexander J. F. Reid, K.C.B., whose father was minister of one of the parishes in that Presbytery.

"Roun' by Keig and Tullynessle  
 'Twas the wifie and her vessel;  
 Ower by Alford and by Towie,  
 Aye the wifie and her bowie;  
 Up to Buchat and Strathdon,  
 Still he drove the wifie on;  
 Hame by Rhynie and Strathbogie  
 Cam' the wifie and her cogie."

I had heard the verses in an abbreviated form, both in Keig and Strathdon, but General Reid heard them first among the Himalayas, where he saw much frontier fighting. One day a tea-planter arrived in the camp, and, to the General's great delight, he was found to be a Scotchman from Aberdeenshire. In the officers' tent after dinner he amused and delighted them with Donside stories, and when he

gave them the above verses the General went and repeated them to all the Scotchmen in the regiment, who were then living a very remote and lonely life among the wild tribes of Kashmir. "None of you people at home," he said, "can tell how much a story like that cheers and heartens the Scottish soldier fighting your battles in a foreign land far from home."

A parish minister in the north-east of Scotland was one day calling on a farmer, a non-churchgoer and much inclined to make fun of religion. The threshing-mill was going at the time, and the farmer said, "We're a' here, winna ye gie's a sermon upon the barn juist for the fun o't? I wad like tae hear ane on a weel-filled barn." "You might have heard one," said the minister, "no later than Sunday last had you been where you should have been—in the parish kirk." "And whaur did ye get a text for that?" asked the farmer. "In the words of John the Baptist: 'He shall gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He shall burn up with unquenchable fire.'" This suggests a story, not very dissimilar, in which a minister, who was chaplain to a city prison, was travelling on a steamer down the Firth of Clyde. A notorious cardsharper, wishing to get into good terms with the minister, said to him in a fawning tone, "I should very much like, sir, to hear one of your sermons." "Well," replied the minister, "you could have heard one of them last Sunday if you had only been where you should have been." "Where was that, then?" asked the light-fingered gentleman. "In the county gaol," was the ready answer.

A Buchan minister, in his callow days, was much addicted to extraordinary gesticulations while preaching. What his tongue lacked in eloquence his arms frantically tried to atone for, and when not attacking the pulpit he was sure to be

'beating the air.' A young Swede, a visitor in the district, heard him one forenoon. In the evening, his host, a burly farmer, opined that his guest would not wish to return to church. "Yes, I'm going," said the foreigner; "I could not make out much of what he said, but I like to see the fellow fighting."

The dislike to the reading of sermons from manuscript has always been strong in the north of Scotland. Even when Dr. Chalmers came to Banff on his first mission of Church Extension in 1839, his preaching disappointed many because he read from MSS. Only, as the old woman said, "it was fell readin'." When a young preacher here, I read a carefully written sermon at the morning service, and in the evening lectured from brief notes on some gospels and epistles. An old member remarked upon the 'inconsistency,' as he deemed it. "Yer evenin's worth twa o' yer mornin'. We can see for oorsels it comes frae the hert. We're nae sure aboot the mornin' sermon," with a smile. The idea (not explicitly uttered) was that what is delivered from brief notes is all one's own, but that what is written is borrowed! The very contrary might be the fact.

An aged woman in Strathconnon was walking to the church now known as the Legal Free Church with her children. The Parish minister rode past at a good pace on a well-bred horse, and the mother said to her daughters, "Siccan a wye tae to be ridin', and this the Sawbath day! Aweel, aweel, a gude man is mercifu' tae his beast!" Shortly afterwards the Free Kirk minister drove past quite as rapidly in his gig, but her tone was changed. "Ah, there he goes!" she exclaimed; "goot man! the Lord pless 'im! His hert's in his wark, ma bairns, an' he's ettlin' tae be at it!"

A Scottish minister was preparing in the vestry of another church to enter the pulpit, but felt some difficulty as to what subject he should preach upon. He had three sermons with him, and as he handled them he consulted the beadle, who was at hand. "What do you think I should preach, Robert?" The officer had never before been so consulted, and he replied, "I wad advise ye, sir, nae to preach ayont twenty meenutes."

A little girl, whose father was given to using strong language, had been brought up by her mother to abjure all profane words. One Sunday, going to church, she heard the minister read Romans xiv. 23: "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat: because he eateth not of faith." The word 'damned' struck the girl's ear with powerful associations of the father's language at home. It was a very scandalised little woman that sat through the service, and at the end of it eagerly asked her mother, "Wasna the minister using bad words? He said 'damned.'" "Oh, but, you know, he read it from the Bible and pronounced it nicely, Jeannie." "Oh, weel," said Jeannie, "I'll juist tell father to pronoonce it nicely tee, mither." She did it, and the appeal of the young lips, the man frankly said, worked a cure of his vulgar habit.

Little Bessie, a maiden of thirteen summers, was deeply impressed with the heinousness of saying 'bad words.' On going to a Banffshire church for the first time, she was greatly shocked to hear the minister use the word 'hell.' Immediately the sanctity of the place was gone for her, and it was a greatly scandalised and impatient little woman that waited for the end of the service so that she might ask her mother if she had heard the dreadful word. On being told that the minister did not use it in a bad

sense, but as part of a verse of Scripture, she solemnly remarked, "Well, then, he could just have said H with a dash, as the books do, and we would all have known what he meant."

A young clergyman came to a Scottish Episcopal church. Though from Lancashire, he did not know Scottish ways nor the accent of the Buchan people, to whom he came to be pastor. However, he determined to do his best and to be very pleasant to everybody in his congregation and outside of it. Calling one day at a small country shop, where he was a stranger, he found the grocer very affable. He brought his wife through to be introduced, and the clergyman asked how she was. "I am well, thank you, and gled to see you." "And how are your little ones whom I have seen playing about?" "They canna be mine, sir; we hae nae bairns." "No bairns, Mrs. Thompson, I'm astonished, and such very nice-looking people too!" He was very desirous of helping one of his poorest women, but having no money of his own he bethought him of the aid of the Parish Council, and approached the Inspector of Poor. who asked what she was in need of. "Underclothing and shoes," was the reply. The inspector thought that a big order, but said that they might probably give her "carpets an' a flannel cot." "Give her carpets and a flannel coat! Why, you'd ruin the poor by your extravagance! I only asked a little underclothing and a pair of shoes." "Gae awa' hame, man!" was the rejoinder. "I only offered ye a petticoat for the wumman and carpet sheen."

A Banff woman was very annoyed that she had not gone in time to speak to her old aunt before the latter became insensible in her last illness. "It wad hae been sic a coonsolation tae me," she said. "I



canna forgie masel' for nae takin' the first train in the mornin' tae see her." "Ay," said her neighbour and crony, "it was a great peety. Shusie wad hae felt yer kindness, and ye wad hae had a pleasant memory o' her last words." "Eh ay," said the bereaved niece. "An' I mith hae got a' her claes tae, instead o' that naisty vratch, Jeannie, that's nae mair sib tae her than masel'. I only got her stockin's and her aul' bonnet. But ye ken the byword, them that canna get a peck maun pit up wi' a stimpert, and them that's near is sure to be noticet."

An old farmer in an upland parish, one of the kindest souls I ever met, died lately. He was not a rich man, but his benefactions were innumerable. He gave a memorable answer on one occasion when a neighbour not given to charity, expressed surprise at his finding so many needy people. "I canna see whaur a' the poverty comes frae. There's plenty o' wark for a'budy that wants it." "Ah!" replied the other, "but I niver hed a five poun' note but I aye saw a ten poun' need for't."

A bright little boy in Banff of ten years of age had been well instructed in the story of Adam and Eve by his Sunday-school teacher, who had informed him that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was an apple tree. The following Christmas the little fellow was visiting with his aunt a fruit shop, and on being offered either an orange or an apple, decidedly preferred the latter. "It's an aipple I'm for, auntie," said he, "for it'll mak' me weiss. The fowks ken a lot o' things that eat aipples."

Rural folks in the north used to be somewhat afraid of the postman; and still more afraid of the telegraph boy. As A. K. H. B. said of them in Dumfriesshire, "They half expect, half-fear, and

half-hope." One woman said to me, "I dinna care to see the post excep' on Monday. I expec' him than wi' Marget's Sunday letter, ye ken; but ony ither day he's nae cowshous. I like his claik; but we cud dae withoot his letters. But that telegraph loon cows a'. It's aye someting byous he brings. The sicht o' him maks me cauldriif. I near by swarfed the last time he put that broon letter into ma han'. I said some guid words afore I opened it frae the Lord's Prayer, a' o't I cud mind. An' aifter a' the letter wus only frae the horse-cowper, aboot the foal that had the income, offerin' John juist naething ava' for the beastie. An' that ablach o' a loon leuch at me fan I taul him it was naebody deid, but it was only aboot a foal. Na! I dinna want nae mair o' *his* broon letters; they're unchancie."

An old labourer in the parish of Banff was dying. He had been a very quiet man, keenly interested in religion, but always preferring to act the part of a listener. In his last illness his favourite Scripture was the Book of Revelation, concerning which he would often ask questions which were not easily answered. The end came suddenly, and the doctor told the wife that it was only a matter of hours. When he knew it, he simply said, "Weel, dear wife, I hev nae choice. My will is juist God's will." No more was said. *Non multa sed multum.*

A country shoemaker of Strathbogie, whom I have long known, and who is also postman for his village and neighbouring district, is mo're willing to talk of religious things than most Scotsmen. He told me that he had little privacy for prayer, having only a two-roomed house; but that he had much communion with his Heavenly Father on the roads. "I think I pray mair on the road than onywhar,

an' it maks it rale shortsome," he said. "An' sometimes I get a chance o' improvin' the occasion; for when the hert's fu' the tongue's ready, an' I seem to get the richt wird for the young chaps."

Sometimes one happens on a humorous touch owing to what might be termed a theological haziness. At a small meeting in a farm kitchen I had been expounding Rehoboam's doings and pointing out the folly of threatening to scourge people with scorpions, whose long jointed tail tormented with its venomous sting, and hinted at what the metaphorical language might mean in the shape of heavier taxation and military service. A crofter who was present thought that the interpretation was wrong, and that "it was mair lickly *that* was the man wha began to mak' use o' the cat-o'-nine-tails, that had aye been the sodger's terror. But it was awfu' to think o' Solomon's ain son bein' sic a rapsallion and nae haein' mair sense. If he gaed *them* the scorpions, they sud hae gaen *him* the jouns."

On another occasion I was speaking in a humble place to a few women and children on the story of Samson. The story caught the female mind at once; and they entered with sympathy into the narrative of the heroic death. One just hoped "that limmer Delilah was amo' the fowk that the hoose fell upo'. He mith hae kent ye canna gither berries aff a whin buss; but wiser men than him hed been caught wi' sic wiles."

It was in the days of ladies' dolmans and very high pews that little Alec, aged three and a half years, went to church for the first time. On returning he was asked what he thought of it. "It's a queer place," said the young critic. "We went intae a press, and sat on a shelf, and father shut the door. The only man I could see climmed heich up into a

little box, and steved there, and he hed a dolman, on."

A young minister in Morayshire had been visiting his parishioners for the first time. Calling at a crofter's house, and being shown into the butt end, he was astonished to see a fantastic and loudly coloured print representing the Evil One hung above the mantelpiece. "Why do you have such a picture, William?" said the pastor wonderingly. "We could all surely do without that gentleman." "Na, sir, we couldna; for if it wasna for him, we wad hae nae use for eyther lawyers or ministers," was the reply.

The custom of praying for good and reasonable weather was rigorously observed in all the churches of the north. It was never omitted from the intercessory prayer; and the nearer harvest-time came the more ample and concrete would the petitions become. On one occasion an aged minister had, in forgetfulness, omitted this part of the prayer, and was reminded of it in a gentle manner by an elder who feared that there was to be a protracted period of drought. He assured his elder he should carefully attend to his hint on the following Sunday, but naively remarked, "I doot, a' the same, Jeems, we'll get nae change till the new moon come in." Even to this day the faith in a change of weather coming with the new moon persists among the great body of the country people.

"I never gie a bawbee to yer foreign missions," said a penurious farmer to one of my lady collectors as she handed to him her book. "We ken naething about thae heythen folk." "But we know," she replied, "that they are heathen, and have not any knowledge of the true God, and that's enough for us." "Weel, but we hae heythen at hame, and

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shud dae our best by them." "Yes, we certainly have," said the lady, "and therefore I won't ask anything from *you*, but will leave you a gratis copy of the New Testament," which she forthwith pulled out of her pocket and laid upon the table.

A story somewhat similar, but with much more of the Yankee smartness in it, was told by Mr. Moody of a Chicago millionaire. The preacher had been pleading the cause of the Hindoo, and the offering was being taken up in church. As the bag came round to the man of wealth, he waved it away from him, saying, "You know I never give to missions for India." "Indeed," said the deacon collecting, "then take something out; the offering is for the heathen, you know."

One of the collectors in a *quoad sacra* parish which I know well gave me the following story of her experiences. The minister had intimated that offerings for an important cause would be called for next week. She visited a certain spacious mansion in the hope of getting a generous subscription. She got, however, nothing but a chilling bow and a refusal from the lady of the house. She wondered whether she should venture to go to the kitchen maid of the same house, who was also a member of the church; but felt that in the discharge of her duty she must call. To her surprise the girl handed her an envelope which had been waiting her call for some time, and on the back of which was written in a school hand, "The love of Christ constraineth me." It contained half a sovereign.

Many years ago, at a religious conference, I met a gentleman who told me that, having been born in very humble circumstances, he had come to know the value of every sixpence he earned. In his mercantile business he had amassed considerable

wealth by his ability and his thrifty habits; but he confessed that, as a result of his hard life, he felt a great reluctance at parting with any portion of his money. He felt so ashamed of this miserly feeling that, to overcome it, on each New Year's day he laid aside one-tenth of his last year's income for Christ's cause, and put it into a box by itself so that he might draw from this bank as if it were the property of another, and so give with a "willing mind." Not yet pleased with his charity, he increased the sum to one-fifth, and then in old age to one-fourth, till this man, who confessed he still had a miserly nature, was known as one, having reference to his income, of the most liberal and generous souls in all the county of Aberdeen.

The drift of the young people in the north-east to cities continues, but has not been an unmixed blessing. It has given them higher wages; it has helped to remove rusticity and to improve their manners. But it has also produced other effects. A young girl left a parish "at the back o' Benachie" for service in London, and did not return for some even years, by which time her father had died and left her mother in poor circumstances, for the most part dependent on a kind son-in-law, who lived in the next parish. The London daughter at last resolved to visit the maternal home. On arriving at the station, bringing with her a large portmanteau full of dresses, she was astonished to find no one waiting for her. She addressed the porter, saying she must get a trap of some kind to drive her home. "Ye canna' get a machine here-aboot," said he, "naebody here hires ava." "But I must have a porter then to carry my luggage," he insisted. He inquired her destination, and on hearing it smilingly said, "I ken ye noo. It's

your mither that's ootside the station there waitin' for ye wi' a barrow."

On the occasion of an annual visit by the governors of a City College to their estate in Aberdeenshire, one of them, a learned professor, was a little severe on some of the tenants. Finally at one farm he animadverted on the condition of the stackyard, which contained, as he thought, a large quantity of hay. "We do not like," he said, "to see so much hay about your place." "Gweedsakes!" was the reply of the tenant, "it's nae hey. Dae ye no ken laist year's strae when ye see't? Hoo can a fairmer hae ower mickle strae?"

A minister of the present Free Church of Scotland was addressing his Presbytery in Ross-shire on the morals of to-day. He had an extreme dislike to bazaars and sales of work in connection with the church, affirming "they are not found either in the Bible or in the Confession of Faith." The question, he said, had been asked at him by some of his people, whether Moses built the Tabernacle with a sale of work. His reply, as reported in the local newspaper, was, "I cannot say. But I do know that at these bazaars prices are put on the articles which are exorbitant, and which certainly Moses would not have put on. If our church allows them, you will have them right and left. In the South they have their tea meetings; but if we cannot have tea meetings in the North, we might have potatoes and herring instead." The Presbytery, however, refrained from passing any opinion on such means of raising money, and simply "counselled kirk-sessions and deacons' courts to have regard in all things to avoid giving offence."

Every one likes to see a young licentiate occupy the pulpit. The look of hope is in his face; he is

making his first essay in a noble work ; and youth consecrated to the cause of Christ presents its most winning aspect to a congregation and excites unusual interest and hopefulness. The judgment is almost always favourable ; and there is general regret if it go against the young probationer. It is certain to be his own fault if it do so. One day a newly fledged licentiate, rather vain of his accomplishments, preached for an old minister, who at the close of the service went to the pulpit stairs with extended hands to offer thanks. The preacher expecting nothing but laudatory remarks, anticipated him by saying loudly, "Now, no compliments, no compliments, sir." "Na, na, my young friend," said the old minister, "I was only gaun to thank ye ; for nooadays I'm gled o' anybody to tak' my place."

In a snug Banffshire farmhouse met a merry party—and the event was a christening. The ceremony over, the guests sat down to discuss a hearty meal—and other things. The young minister appeared to be in a reverie while a quick-witted elderly widow was telling an apt and amusing story. He was brought suddenly back to the reality by her hearty laughter evoked by her anecdote, and asked her to repeat the tale to him. Being naturally piqued by his former listlessness she instantly replied, "Na, na, sir, ye dinna preach your sermons ower agen to fowks that winna listen at first."

It happened in the days when soirees reigned supreme throughout Scotland, invading halls and churches alike. Two ministers in the same small town had a diversity of gifts : one was oratorical, and could always fill his church ; while the other's quaint and humorous stories invariably filled the town hall at the soiree season. Each was credited with being envious of the other. On one occasion



the humourist sent an invitation to the other to appear on the platform with him at his congregational soiree the following week. Knowing his limitations in this respect, his brother sent a curt refusal, ending with his initials "C. T. S." Disappointed at having lost an opportunity of scoring, he of the ready wit mused, "Ay, ay, just so, I see. C. T. S. — Can't Tell Stories; just so."

An old minister approaching dotage, grew very eccentric in his ways. He would go into the county town of Elgin almost daily to gather news and meet friends and old acquaintances, and it was with difficulty he was persuaded to return to his manse. His "man" was in the custom of coming in for him on such evenings, and he always apologised for his master's eccentricities and confused talk in the same words, which became well known: "He's a fine aul' gentleman but essentrick, ye ken. He's juist like the toor o' Pisa, a bittie aff the stra cht noo."

A boy found his way into a manse garden one evening in the beginning of July. The apples were blooming into the beauty of a golden red and looked very attractive. The minister's wife, walking around, heard a rustle in one of the standard apple trees, and discerning the boots inferred the culprit. "Boy, what are you doing?" The answer came slowly, "Just tryin' to get my wye oot." "Are you going to climb the sky, eh?" she asked. "Na, I'm comin' doon," was the reply. "How many apples have you eaten? Tell me the truth." "Nane ava," was the firm reply, as he handed her several apples out of his pocket. "See, tak' them a'; they're terrible soor." "So you have eaten some, then," she said. "Na, na!" replied the lad, "I ken by their look what they are."

Visiting an elderly Scotch lady one day, who had lost a very loving husband and been much reduced in circumstances thereafter, I was struck by her constant cheerfulness. "You're the happiest person in the parish notwithstanding all you've come through." "Yes, I'm happy for I'm aye lookin' forward." "Never backward?" I asked. "As little as possible. It's nae use to dwell on the past. My hopes hae a' gane forrit, and my heart gaes wi' my hopes. Ye aften preach upo' the Advent, sir, an' that's what I like best." It is the on'y testimony I have ever got in my ministry to the joy that springs from the doctrine of the Advent. But it ought to be a powerful and abiding one.

Talking to a man who, though a member, very seldom appeared at church services, I expressed a wish that he might be persuaded to come regularly to worship and begin the good habit for himself and his family. His reply was singular, but the reasons are probably latent in many minds and patent to few. "Weel, sir, to tell you the hale truth, I dinna gang tae the kirk in winter because it's ower cauld, and I dinna gang tae the kirk in summer because it's ower warum. Ye see, it's a guid thing for the health to keep warum in winter and to keep queel in summer." "But," I replied, "that leaves the spring and autumn months as fitting times for you, and that's six months of the year of moderate weather." "Ah! but ye forget that's jist oor twa busy sizzons; it's a' plooin' and sawin' in spring; and it's a' cuttin' and stackin' in the fa' o' the year." "But you neither sow nor cut on Sundays," I said. "Na; but aifter a man's been sawin' and cuttin' a' the week, there's naethin' but sawin' and cuttin' in's heid o' Sunday; an' he canna get aff o't." "The kirk," I replied, "is the place to let ye get 'aff o't,' and

give your mind a lift up to higher things." "Aweel, aweel! but a workin' fairmer's sair trachelt, an' it's a terrible thing to get oot o' my Saiturday into ma Sunday claes; an' I suppose that's the rael rizzen. I winna argue wi' ye mair, sir; for I dinna doot sweerness is ahint it a'."

I got the same reason from a cottar woman. "To tell the truth, sir, the lasses are a' sae braw at the kirk noo that I wad look oot o' the fashion. An' besides I just canna be fashed to get ready." One regrets that the church should ever become the place for exhibiting "braws." Where that is so, the poor and overworked are conspicuous by their absence, to the great and permanent detriment of the Christian church, which should always have the poor in it.

Two women were leaving Banff Church. "What was yon," said the one, "the minister said aboot the sermon nae bein' done yet?" "Oh," replied the other, "he said the rael sermon begins aefter ye gang oot o' the kirk door." "An' fat's that?" "Oh, it means we maun pit it a' into oor wark, ye ken." "Weel," said she, "A'm nae to wirk at *his* sermon; he's payed to wirk at it himsel'."

I had been preaching on a text in the Book of Proverbs about answering a fool according to his folly; and I found that a gamekeeper had put it into excellent practice the following week. He had to attend an English gentleman who had rented the low ground shootings from his employer for the months of September and October, but to his regret found the sportsman much addicted to explosions of anger. A black spaniel became the special object of his wrath and in a violent tone he ordered the gamekeeper to "shoot the brute and send her to h——." The quiet answer of the gamekeeper fairly took away the breath of the blusterer "Wad it

no' be better, sir, to shute her and send her to heaven, and ye wad niver see her again ? ”

My old friend, Dr. George Wilson of St. Michael's, Edinburgh, told me that he once was the guest of a wealthy nobleman at a beautiful mansion-house in the east of Scotland. One of the little daughters, a beautiful child of some eight summers, had been playing with her brothers and had quarrelled. She came running into the drawing-room where my friend sat talking with her father ; and to the latter, who asked what ailed her, with tears in her eyes she said, “ Father, I can't get my own way.” He smiled and stroked her hair kindly, and then said, “ Go over to Dr. Wilson there and ask if he always gets his own way.” After some hesitation and with a wondering look in her eyes, she approached him and asked, “ Do oo get oor own way, Dr. Wilson ? ” He instantly replied, in the kindest of tones, “ Yes, my dear, I do, when I'm very bad.” She retired a few steps, looked wonderingly at him, then slowly turned round and walked out of the room. Her father thanked the minister for his wise answer. That little girl is now the clever and amiable wife of one of the leading members of His Majesty's present Government.

Dr. Wilson told me of a little boy, the son of a Christian Scientist who had got possession of a whip and went round the house and the garden of his father lashing everything that he could reach with his new gift. Going into the park near his home in which\*were some sheep and a goat he plied the whip on the timid animals, which to his delight at once fled from him. But it was different with the goat, which, when flecked with the whip, turned upon the boy and made for him with its horns. He instantly fled, hard followed by the leaping animal. He barely

managed to get inside his father's gate and to shut it in face of the angry beast. Then with his feeling of safety came the reaction, and he sat down on the grass and bellowed. The father ran out to hear the cause of the little fellow's grief. "What is the matter, Jack?" "Oh! that awfu' goat! that angry brute, daddie!" "Now, Jack," said the Scientist parent, "haven't I often told you that all these fears are mere ideas and that you may resist them? If you only get rid of the idea of the angry goat you will get no harm, Jack. It's simply an idea, my boy. Haven't I often told you that?" "Ay, daddie," replied the boy, "you often told me, but you didn't tell the goat." The father smiled, and became a wiser man. There is no doubt that the will power can do much to pull a man together and conquer his nervousness. But it is quite another thing to conquer the temper of the irate goat.

## CHAPTER IX

### BEADLES AND PRECENTORS

THE Scottish beadle bulks largely in all Scottish story books. At every Sunday service he is seen. He meets most of the people. He is the retailer of all church gossip and ecclesiastical news, so welcome to the lonely crofter or the remote farmer. Being in close touch with the parish minister his authority is universally felt and, *ceteris paribus*, is acknowledged.

In rural parishes he is often also 'the minister's man,' tiller of the garden and the glebe, and general factotum round the manse. Many stories in the north of Scotland connect with this personality. And where he is a man of strong individuality, he is in every parish a remarkable personage, counting for much at all church services and elections of ministers to vacant parishes.

Being such, it need scarcely be said that he is the confidential friend of the manse, and takes the deepest interest in all its members. I remember one of them, the beadle at Dunnottar to the Rev. Alexander Silver. He would say, "There's nae a day but the minister consults me aboot onything and a'thing—aboot the kye and the cuddie and the mare; he speirs aboot them a', and ilka Sunday he speirs a' the news o' the kirkyaird frae me. Ye see, he wadna ken a' that's gaen on i' the pairish unless I gied him't."

An old man died in Banff who belonged to Auchindoir. He was not beadle, but for a time he was 'the minister's man' on the glebe and assisted at the manse. He was very proud of this connection, and when I called on him frequently in his old age he would talk of little else. "I workit a' his glebe for William Reid, and a richt learned man he was, and taul me lots o' things. An' I kent a' his sons an' dochters, an' I've keepit acquaint wi' their ongauns ever sin syne. There's nae ane o' them I dinna ken about."

Another, who was for many years beadle of the Free Church in Banff, and whom I loved to see and talk with in his last lingering illness, was equally fond of rehearsing the doings of his minister and the story of his work as beadle. Only Sandy never boasted. "I aye felt I was oonworth' o' the place, sir. Ye ken, the man that cairries up the buiks to the poopit wad need to be a model man. He shud be nae far ahint ony o' the elders. It's a sair responsibeelity that he has upon his shooders; and I aye felt it a wecht upo' me. Mony a time I prayed aboot it; an' Mr. Geddie aften spoke aboot it tae me. He liket me, ye ken, to magniffee ma office." Many a pleasant and profitable hour I spent with Sandy. When the Duke of Fife stayed at Duff House he was always employed to carry the letters from the post office to the mansion house. Regarding this duty he said that in the discharge of it, "I aften thocht o' King Dauvid's words to Abimelech, 'The King's business requireth haste.' For, ye see, the Duke was the King's son-in-law, and some o' the letters micht be frae the palace o' Windsor. But I just thocht on Sunday, Weel, this is the King's wark tee, and it's mair to be beadle to the kirk than post-runner tae His Grace the Duke."

A beadle story connects with the parish of Kinedlert, now spelled King Edward, within a few miles of Banff. The beadle had an old score to settle with the deceased, and the burial fee offered the last and only opportunity of settling it. The relatives complained of the overcharge to the parish minister who officiated, and the latter remonstrated with the guardian of the kirkyard. But it was all in vain. John would not return a penny of the fee he had exacted. "Na, na, minister; ye maun ken that yon man took a nip o' me wi' the price o' a calf years syne, an' it's ma last chance o' gettin' back ma siller."

A beadle in the north was in the manse study one Friday evening and talked with the minister on many parish topics. The minister confided to his faithful servant that for the past six weeks he had been studying the Wars of the Roses, and had found great benefit in the writings of the historian.

"Would ye not like, George, to read it? I'll give you home a volume with you, and you'll enjoy it, I'm sure." "Weel, sir, ye're verra kind, but dinna tribble yersel' aboot me. I'll juist lat ye tak' yer sprig on yer ain fiddle. The *Banffshire Journal's* mair in my line than thae wars." This reminds me of a somewhat similar story of an old lady who was advised to read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and who replied, "Na, na, I'll juist lat byganes be byganes."

A minister in the north, desirous of giving his people a connected course of teaching from the beginning of his ministry in the parish, resolved first of all to give a course of Biblical lectures designed to eradicate false and superstitious ideas from their minds, and then to commence a course of constructive doctrinal teaching. As he was approaching the



climax of the first part he told the beadle that on Sunday next he would preach on the Devil, and would show the folly of the superstitious belief in the personality of the Evil Spirit. Sandy shook his head significantly, and added: "Ye may preach onything else ye like, but if ye tell them there's nae deevil, the folk o' this pairish will never come near a kirk again."

Somewhat similar is the following anecdote about a much-respected Free Church minister in the north. The beadle was talking of him to a stranger who arrived at the church for the Sunday service, and asked how he was liked. "We like him verra weel," said the church officer, "but we liket the auld minister afore him better." "Why," said the stranger, "I hear your new man is a remarkably good preacher." "Ay, ay, he's a guid preacher, but he's naething tae the auld ane. Oor last man was awfu' weel acquaint wi' the deevil, an' lat us a' ken aboot's po'er; an', tae my min', a sermon withoot deevil's nae worth a doit."

A beadle one day, on returning from an evening service in a northern burgh, called at the house of one of the elders to ask if the wife was recovering from a sickness. He was invited to come in and have a crack. "And what was the minister on the nicht, Dawvid? What was his text?" asked the invalid. "The text was frae the Proverbs," said he. "And what proverb was it, Dawvid?" "Oh, that aul' proverb that speaks, ye ken, aboot spoilin' the rod and sparlin' the child." "Hoots, Dawvid, it's the ither wye aboot, isn't it?" said she. "Ay, ay," said Dawvid, "juist that: it's sparlin' the child and spoilin' the rod."

This incident reminds me of a similar infirmity of memory in the case of a bailie who went to hear a

candidate preach for a vacant charge to which the Town Council held the gift of presentation. The reverend gentleman preached on the text, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," and the bailie was highly pleased with the sermon. Next day he was urging the appointment of this minister on a Town Councillor, when suddenly the latter asked, "What was the text." "The text," said he, "the text—let me see. What was it again? Oh yes, it began with 'Now—now is—now is the——' Ay—that's it!—Now's the day and now's the hour.'"

The church beadle, being usually also gravedigger in the north of Scotland, had a high conception of the great importance of funerals, and of the necessity of every one attending them in their very best suit of clothes. One such functionary, when drawing near the end of his life, asked about the clothes his sons had, and was told they had all black coats and hats, but that his son-in-law had only a grey suit. He sent for the latter, who was not such a temperate man as he could have wished, and admonished him from his bed thus: "Robbie, man, I wad like ye to be sober and save as muckle as ye can, and get a stand o' blacks for my funeral. It wad be sair upo' me if ye na come in blacks. It wad gie me a turn in ma grave, Robbie."

On one occasion a licentiate, who was not remarkable for deep thinking, was preaching at great length. The beadle slipped out to attend to the stoking of the fire, and met a Sabbath-school teacher who was coming to teach a class at the close of the service. "Weel," said he to the beadle, "is the young man near the end of his sermon now, Weelum?" "Hoot ay," said the latter; "he's at the end o' his strae, but he's be spinnin' oot his raip a bit langer."

In one of the parishes of the Presbytery of Fordyce the beadle had a great esteem and respect for his minister, who was a most worthy man of a thoroughly independent mind. A student belonging to the parish had won a scholarship at Oxford, and after living a year there he returned home to his father's farm in the holidays and went to hear his old minister preach. Next day he met the beadle on the road and they talked. "Do you know," said the student, "I discovered Homer in the sermon yesterday. Your minister is not original. The simile of the wind upon the barley is borrowed from the *Odyssey* of Homer." "Dinna tell me that," responded the beadle. "I believe it's mair likely Homer borrowt frae oor man. We've fine win's an' gran' barley in the Laighs o' Banffshire."

A beadle was ringing the bell of the Parish Church outside the main door when a stranger approached and said, "Can I get a seat in your church to-day?" "Hoot ay, and a guid ane," said the church officer. "Your minister," remarked the stranger, "is very tall, is he not?" "Ay, is he," was the answer, "a guid bit abune sax feet." "And of large girth, too?" "Hoot ay," said the beadle, "he's a wonnerfu' man ony wye that ye can tak' him, up or doon, east or wast, inside or ootside, a wonnerfu' man, and a wechty ane."

A parish minister in Morayshire had a 'man' who was very fond of driving him round the farms in his phaeton, and having a crack with the servants while the minister was in the farmhouse. He always put himself first in their conversation. "Me an' the minister have had a lang roon' the day. He's gey bashfu' and hasna muckle tae say tae folks on the road, but I niver lat onybody gang by withoot a word. It wadna dee ava. But me and him's rael

pop'lar noo—we speak tae a'body." In England the proverb is: "The beadle always echoes the vicar." In Scotland he is far more independent.

My first beadle in Banff was a fine specimen of the old type, now all but extinct, and he had great faith in the benefits and the independence attached to Establishment and Endowment. On one occasion I had to speak kindly but faithfully to a husband and wife who at some New Year convivialities had indulged too freely and quarrelled badly. They both at once left the church and disregarded my advice, accusing me of listening to lies and gossip. I mentioned it to John and asked what he thought of them. "A coorse lot," he replied, "an' they winna care a curse fat ye may say. But (by way of consolation) dinna mind their leavin,' sir. Nane o' the steepend gangs wi' them."

I had another beadle who was gardener as well as church officer, and a general factotum about the place. One of my clerical brethren from a neighbouring parish one day asked him to recommend some one for the beadleship of that rural parish. He leaned upon his spade for a few moments, and then, with a sly glance, he said, "Noo, if ye hed speirt at me aboot a precentor or even an assistant tae yersel', wad sune hae helpit ye to ane; but a richt beadle, 'roun' richt, he's ane in a hunder. Na! I raelly canna pit ma finger on ane juist the noo."

In a Parish Church of an Aberdeenshire town there were two baptismal services to be conducted at the close of the forenoon service. Unfortunately, however, owing to drought, the water at that part of the town was turned off by the Water Commissioners, and the church tap would not flow. Just as they were to begin the service, Peter hurried into the vestry with the information. "What shall we do, Peter?"

asked the minister. "We must just wait till you go to the other end of the town for water, or else down to the burn." Peter suggested a simpler course to solve the difficulty. "Oh, sir, that wad tak ower lang; juist pit yer finger into the basin an' lat on there's water in't, an' neither the fowks nor the bairn will ever ken." But in this case the minister rightly declined. "Baptism is by water, Peter, and we must get the symbol to get the seal; so away you go, and the folks can wait."

In many elections of ministers to Parish Churches, since the abolition of patronage, the beadle has played a not unimportant part which adds to his status and his esteem in the community. One young cleric was well aware that he owed not a little to this functionary, who, at the kirk door on several previous Sundays, had spoken highly in the young minister's favour. Some months after his ordination to the parish, the minister asked, "William, what was it that you liked in my preaching that made you prefer me so much to the other candidate?" "Weel, sir," said the beadle, "to tell the plain truth, it wes juist because he wes sic a wee cratur, an' ye were juist aboot ma ain size, an' I thocht your auld claes wad fit me far better."

A young minister, fresh from the city, was preaching in a fishing village where every one knew about the seaman's life. In order to gain their attention and interest he took for his text, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul," and preached very effectively on the subject of Christian hope. At the close of it the church officer ventured to say to the young man, "You've dune weel, sir, an' the fowks were a' benefeeted, but they a' saw ye didna ken muckle aboot fishin'." "Dear me," said the young man, "how was that?" "It wis yon bit whaur ye

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bade them a' cast their anchor on the rock. D'ye no' ken the anchor maun sink intae the sand ; there's naething tae haud on tae upon a rock."

A somewhat similar piece of advice was given to a young assistant who had recently arrived in a parish near the banks of the Bogie. He knew nothing of agriculture, but developed a sudden interest in cows and pigs, in poultry and in crops. Passing up the road to the church he met the beadle on a May morning, and said, "Now, Sandy, did you ever see lovelier oat braird than in that field there?" "Na, I nivver did," replied Sandy. "Only it disna happen tae be oats." "Dear me," said the young man, "you don't mean to say that that's grass, Sandy; you surely know better." "So I micht," replied the beadle, "for it's mony a lang day since I sawed barley, an' I canna be mistakken aboot the colour o't. I heard ye speak aboot the differ atween Peter and Paul ae day. Weel, to my een, there's nae less differ atween oats an' barley." The young man wisely made himself acquainted with the colour of the crops before he again spoke to Sandy about the spring braird.

A learned Doctor of Divinity in the north was a great devotee to the rod and the line. He sometimes took his man with him to fish. One day the fly took unfortunately caught in his eyelid; whereupon he had to lay down the rod and hurry off on his bicycle to the nearest surgeon. The wound caused much inflammation, and he feared he would not be able to officiate next Sunday. On Sandy's return with the rod to the manse the minister, with his eye all bandaged, said, "You'll say nothing about it, Sandy, but keep a calm sough about the fishing and the fly." Sandy consented, but urged the minister to preach next Sunday, bandage and all. Rather

unwillingly the Reverend Doctor consented, whereupon Sandy said, "I'll mak' it kent ower a' the pairish, sir, an' ye'll hae the biggest congregation ye ever hed." "What, Sandy! to hear a blind minister?" "Ay," said Sandy, "for there'll be nae readin' o' yer sermon on Sunday, but ye'll gie them 't straucht aff yer tongue, sir, an' they'll like it a dale better. Eh, sir, it's a God's providence that that heuk stickit in yer e'e."

The late Rev. Dr. Milne of Fyvie was Moderator of the Church of Scotland in 1905. During his moderatorial year he devoted himself most unsparingly to all public duties, refusing no call for help from even the most remote parishes of the land. A beadle in a north-east parish was greatly captivated by Dr. Milne's suavity and kindness, and said of him, "Dr. Milne kens mony things. He's a far traivelled man and a clever ane forby. An' he said he kent a guid beadle whaniver he saw him. He taul me I hed a' the three qualitees o' a richt kirk officer—guid sense, guid judgment, and guid gumption; and he said he hedna foond them a' githered into ae single man afore. Ay, Dr. Milne was a gran' man. We winna see his marrow sune again."

A minister attended the Synod of Moray on the occasion of a high debate over certain innovations in worship. He came in order to listen and find help in coming to a rational judgment. But he got so excited by the long and bitter debate that he felt he must not vote until he got into a calmer state of mind; so he retired to meditate in one of the quiet streets, and to regain his equanimity, while the vote was being taken. On returning he was asked by the beadle (a keen partisan) why he did not vote, and he told him the reason. The church functionary could not understand him. "I wuss," said he, "I

wis an elder and hed a vote. I wadna care a curse for your calm joodgment. I wad vote wi' a' ma nicht aginst their new-fangled innovations."

This anecdote reminds me of another minister in the same quarter who, about the same time, proposed they should have "a closed time for all church courts during the next twelve months." He maintained that if all meetings of Presbyteries and Synods were suspended for a year, and all the ministers and elders were sent to do spade work in their respective districts, that an incalculable gain would accrue to the church and the world. The late Dr. Macgregor of St. Cuthbert's was in strong sympathy with this view of things, and I remember how he evoked tremendous applause when he declared that he had entered a certain Presbytery "feeling like a saint, and that, after listening to a debate, he left it feeling like a raging devil."

In a United Free Church of a north-east town there was an elder who was given to much fault-finding and harsh criticism. No church service ever pleased him. The Bible class was taught on a wrong principle. The Sabbath school in its system of instruction was quite behind the day. The missions of the church were wrongly conducted, and the moneys subscribed for them were mal-administered. At length he fell foul of the beadle, Robbie did not attend to his duties, and should be dismissed. This came to the beadle's ears, who complained to the minister; but he, a peaceable man, would not interfere. Robbie took the law into his own hands. Being in the employment of the Water Committee, he was one day engaged in washing the pavements with the water-hose. Seeing his enemy approaching, the temptation to retaliate was too great, and overwhelmed Robbie. He turned the nozzle on to the



critic and soaked him with it from head to foot, to the huge amusement of the bystanders. The case came by complaint before the kirk-session, but the fun it created was so great that Robbie was simply cautioned and requested in future to behave himself. His defence was very brief: "He's juist a girin' crature, and does naething to help ony thing or onybody, but juist fin' faut. He min's me aye o' the Huntly man they speak o':

"Ye're a' wrang, ye're a' wrang,  
An' a'thegither a' wrang;  
There's nae a man in a' the toon  
But's a'thegither a' wrang."

In Stonehaven, about the middle of the last century, were two brothers, well known as Johnnie and Jamie, very worthy men. The former was beadle in the Parish Church, the latter precentor in the Free Church. I knew them well, and often heard them talk about their duties. John would say, "I ring the bell, Jamie, and ye raise the tune; we're baith doin' guid wark." And the other would reply, "Ay, Johnnie man, ye mak' the music ootside an I mak' the music inside; we're baith at the same wark. The kirks cudna do wantin' us." "Na, Jamie," replied the other. "If there wis nae beadle they wadna ken the oqr; and if there wes nae precentor they wadna ken the tune. They wad be sair misguided withoot us twa. 'Deed, if we warna there the kirks micht sune hae to be closed."

The old precentor had neither choir nor organ in my young days, and he depended much on his pitchfork. We could hear the sound of the fork every time that the precentor rose in Fetteresso Church; and we heard the hum of his voice as he tried to get

the keynote of the tune. Occasionally he, himself a tenor, got an assistant with a baritone voice to sit beside him in the 'laiteran' or desk beneath the pulpit. Sometimes we heard him whispering to this assistant, "Am I heich the day, or am I laich?" On one occasion he began on too low a key, and the people could not sing the tune, which was 'Kilmarnock.' At the end of the first verse the baritone called to him, "Heicher, heicher!" The good man changed the keynote, and then found by the end of the second verse that he was so high that none of the congregation could reach the topmost notes, except one tall, middle-aged spinster, who screamed them out, to our infinite amusement and amazement. Ever afterwards this precentor would avoid 'Kilmarnock,' saying, "It's naether heich nor laich, an' the middle note's nae aisy to get at."

I remember well when the choir was first introduced, and also the great sensation that it created. The precentor remained, but he became less a voice and more a vocal leader and instructor. Some people strongly objected to it, on the ground of its being an innovation, and they would not sing with a 'band,' deeming it far too much of an operative performance. When the instrument, organ or harmonium, came in at a later stage—it was not introduced in Banff until after the mission of Messrs. Moody and Sankey in the Parish Church—the precentor very soon vanished. In Banff, John Pirie, our excellent leader, was one of the best servants the church ever had, and he was one of the few of whom Mr. Sankey, most capable judge, spoke in terms of the highest praise.

In a neighbouring parish a young man was elected to the office of precentor, who, on first entering the

'laiteran,' was so overpowered with the sense of every eye being turned upon him, that his voice faltered, he broke down utterly, and in sheer nervousness opened the door and fled from the church, and in the following week left the parish. Another was elected, a young farmer, and so timorous was he at entering on his duties that he went to consult an old precentor, many miles away, who had for some years retired from the same important office. This latter was well 'seasoned,' and his method of overcoming nervousness in the precentor's desk deserves the prize for originality. "I can gie ye a braw cure for nervishness, an' ane that I've proved tae masel'. Juist tak' some coppers i' yer pouch, Robbie, an' when it's near time for risin', jingle them up i' yer han', man. It'll gie ye a gran' feelin' o' independance, and it hes a winnerfu' effec' upo' the nerves!"

In the Parish Church of Grange, in the early part of last century, the precentor was far from perfect. He would sometimes start with one tune, and before the psalm was ended would slip unwittingly into another. But he was not in the least ashamed of it. "It gies them a variety," he said, "an' it lats them see whaur the sense cheenges an' the laich should tak' the place o' the heich." The kirk-session found fault, but the congregation took his side and saw no reason for getting a substitute. This precentor had not the modesty of the famous one who assisted the great Dr. Chalmers in his occasional preachings during his professorship in Edinburgh at the village of Water of Leith. The Doctor never failed to thank the old man for his services in leading the praise in the old Highland way, which he affirmed he much enjoyed, despite all its slurs and grace notes and variations. One evening Tammas disclaimed his

right to any thanks, because he "hed lost the tune a'thegither." "No, no!" said the eloquent divine. "I never heard you sing better, Tammas." "Ay, but I'm ashamed o' masel', Doctor. I gaed aff the tune the nicht. I began wi' 'Irish' but lost it in the second line. But I catched the 'French' i' the third line, and keepit him firm." "Well done, Tammas!" replied Dr. Chalmers; "you ought to have been at Waterloo!"

A Banffshire minister tells how he was first drawn to think of divine things by being asked, when a mere boy, to join the church choir and sing alto. He soon sang with confidence, and not long after was asked to raise the tune at the weekly prayer-meeting conducted by the parish minister in a small side school. He promised to do so on the condition that the minister should sing only psalms in common metre and not in short metre, the tunes for which were not well known to the people. He attributes his dedication to the ministry to a 'call' that came to him, a mere lad of thirteen, through a paraphrase which he had to sing, the spiritual truth of which suddenly burst upon his soul during the singing of it. It is a fine paraphrase of the Beauty of Wisdom in Proverbs viii. :

"For she has treasures greater far  
Than east or west unfold;  
And her rewards more precious are  
Than all their stores of gold."

n that verse the Spirit spoke to the boy's soul, and e then and there gave himself to the ministry of od's Church.

Two young students at Aberdeen University, who ad sung in the College choir, and were accustomed

also to lead the singing in a small mission near the Gallowgate, were present on a Sunday evening in the East Church of Saint Nicholas. An eloquent Doctor of Divinity was delivering a sermon to a crowded congregation in the interests of the Students' Missionary Society. By some misunderstanding the choir and choir-leader, who were to conduct the service of praise, did not attend in church; and when the reverend gentleman entered the pulpit he had to appeal for volunteers to come forward and lead the singing. No one responding, the two young students stepped forward to the choir seat and were successful in doing their part. Strange to say, neither of the two was ever again in the East Parish Church until each returned, as an ordained minister, to preach from its pulpit. That singular experience had, at least in the case of one of them, if not of both, a direct influence, under providential guiding, on their future career.

A young precentor, in the first month of his office, was still extremely nervous as he began the line of the opening psalm. One Sunday it happened to be a portion of Psalm cxix., beginning with the words :

"Teach me, O Lord, the perfect way  
Of Thy precepts divine."

An old elder, observing his timorousness and the several attempts he made to begin, said to him at the close of the service, "Yon verse, laddie, wis awfu' appropriate. But haud ye on, and He'll teach ye the perfec' wye yet."

## CHAPTER X

### READING AND LITERATURE

FIFTY years ago not many books were to be found in a Scottish farmhouse, and still fewer were seen in the cottar's home. Always the Bible was there; often it would be a large print copy, with notes explanatory and historical. In rare cases one found Matthew Henry's Bible, which was counted a rich possession.\*

After the Bible came the *Pilgrim's Progress*, with a few steel plates of Christian starting on his journey, of Vanity Fair, and of the Crossing the River of Death. These three pictures made an indelible impression on our young memories. Next in rank as a rule came Boston's *Fourfold State*, which, throughout Kincardineshire, Aberdeenshire, and Banffshire, was greatly read by the heads of families. Samuel Rutherford's *Letters* would, however, compete for the third place, but in Forfar and Kincardine Willison's *Afflicted Man's Companion* was almost always on the shelf beside Bunyan and Boston. It was the book which invariably was taken by visitors to read in any home which sorrow had entered.

These books are full of wise and solid teaching, and were rather meat for men than milk for babes. But a strong race of men was raised upon such food who made Scotland what she is to-day. In no small

measure their steadfastness was due to their mental and moral diet.

When school boards came into existence in 1873, they were the cause of the introduction of many new books into the homes of the farmers and crofters. Essays in English had to be written to please the inspectors, and this necessitated the purchase of a good English dictionary. One small farmer in the parish of Banff was pressed by his girls to bring home such a volume, which cost the sum of three shillings and sixpence. It became of great interest as it began to be used by the children, and the parents came to see how much was in it. The father showed it to me with pride and could scarcely contain himself. "It's juist a wonnerfu' buik ; nae brag about it, ye ken. It juist says its say, and it's dune wi't. Losh, sir, it mak's ye think. I read a page o't ilka nicht, and it's rale divertin'. Elsie says it has a' the words in't that ever Bunyan wrote or Milton kent. I read it ower and ower to masel' and think that, wi' a wee bit shufflin' o' its words, a body mith aisy mak' up a poem himsel'. I grudged the three and saxpence sair, but 'deed it has gien's a lot o' rale pleasure."

A crofter whom I met possessed, besides his Bible and Bunyan, a Gazetteer of Scotland in two volumes, which he had read again and again until he knew it very intimately. He was fond of parading his knowledge of the size and rental of each of the surrounding parishes, and quite astonished me by the accuracy of his information, until I discovered the source of it. Meeting at a funeral a minister who had newly come to his parish, he wished him success in his work and soon talked of the large acreage of his parish and the number of crofts it contained. The young minister confessed his ignorance of these facts, and turned

the conversation to his work in the Sunday school and Bible class. Meeting this crofter afterwards, I asked him what he thought of my young friend. "I thoct nae muckle o' him," was the reply. "Think, sir, o' a minister that didna ken the awcrage o' his ain pairish, an' him pretendin' to be a man o' learnin'!"

Another crofter was a good Plymouth Brother, and his small library hung above the mantelpiece on a pair of boards which he had himself cut and painted green, and which hung on the wall by a strong cord. It contained some two dozen books, and among them the commentary of the Bible by an American divine, which he consulted much before speaking at the meetings of the Brethren. He had greatly astonished the people one day by addressing them on the Epistle to the Romans, and giving them briefly the whole argument of Saint Paul. I heard of it, and wondered how he had been able to prepare his sermon. He charmed me by telling the mode of preparation. "Ye see, sir, I tak' doon the Buik to the stable wi' me an' hae a look at it noo and than, when I'm cleanin' oot or brushin' up the harness at nicht. And syne again, neest mornin', I tak' anither look o't afore we gang to the pleugh; and syne on the lea rig I gang owre ma lesson ahint the horses. The horses hae't a' first, an' maun ken it weel. 'Deed, sir, I aften think the verra horses will be converted some day; an' mebbe I'll meet them again in anither warld." Then with a bright smile he added, "I'm shure at ony rate they ken the Romans weel."

This same man was fond of discussing the immortality of the soul, and believed dogs and horses had something immortal about them. "They're



freends, ye ken, and freens are sure to meet again somewhere." He was greatly pleased with Andrew Lang's words which I quoted, as coming from one that sat loose by the orthodox creed—

"For 'tis an old belief  
That on some foreign shore,  
Beyond the sphere of grief,  
Dear friends shall meet no more.

That creed I fain would keep  
That hope I'll not forego,  
Eternal be the sleep,  
Unless to waken so."

This crofter had a good voice, and sometimes acted as precentor at various meetings. Frequently at the plough he would sing a bit of a psalm. "It mak's the lang day shortsome, sir; and Dawvid an' me hae mony a sang thegither. An' when the horses grow tired at the en' o' the day, an' are nae willin' to start up anither rig, I juist begin Bangor or Jackson's, an' aff they gang as willin' as ye like. D'ye no' think, sir, horses are releegious. When ye tak' them the richt wye, they're awfu' kennin' brutes."

Forty years ago scarcely any of the small farmers had read a novel, although a lending library was not far off and was accessible. One of them said that his daughters had brought home some yellow-backed cheap stories which disgusted him with their high-born beauties and grand life, their shocks of tragedy and their invariably successful termination. Had he only begun with the Waverlies, they would have given ideal dignity to his days and widened his horizons. But he was unfortunate in his first taste, and remained sceptical of the benefit

of imaginative literature. "They hae nae grip. They're a' confectionery, sir. There'll nae corn grow on yon rigs," was all he would say. He greatly preferred the old ballads of Scotland which had charmed his youth. Their mythology brought an atmosphere and had a wide amplitude, giving space to his mind, which had been cramped amid the Braes of Banffshire, by his hard life and narrow surroundings. They directly addressed his imagination and wakened up the poet within him. We must have symbols of some kind. The stories in the ballad literature furnished such, and were full of colour and suggestion.

Book agents are now everywhere offering encyclopædias and dictionaries and Bibles in parts. Many publishers now push expensive volume books by offering them at once, on promise of part payment, to teachers, ministers, and men of some position. It is wholly an evil; and many professional men when young get into debt in consequence of this trick played upon them. The evil would, however, be far less if the volumes were always studied and read. But again, human nature operates for evil; because what has been easily gained is never much appreciated. A young man in this part of the country had begun business as a small shopkeeper. He thought he should like to see some learned and well-bound volumes on his library shelves, he having bought such shelving at a sale of household furniture without a volume to put on them. The book-agent found him an easy prey, and soon the large folios in calf of *Chambers's Encyclopædia* and others looked resplendent behind the glass bookcase. A ministerial friend called and expressed his admiration of the books; and also

his astonishment at the expensive nature of the tradesman's literature. "Have you paid them, John?" "Nae yet," said he, "but I'm payin' by instalments, ye ken." "And do you make much use of these large encyclopædias?" "Oh ay; ilka day," said John. "I'm very glad to hear it. You'll soon have a full mind and be a man of information by such nightly use." "Weel, sir," said he, "I use them ilka evening. They're verra handy, ye ken, to press ma troosers wi' ower nicht!"

## CHAPTER XI

### COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

SCOTTISH wisdom has much to say about matrimony. And as a rule its proverbs on this point excel in caution, and are in keeping with the Scottish character. Emotion is seldom exhibited; indeed, 'the national genius' severely restrains it in love as well as in religion. In the old days sweethearts had to 'behave themselves'; to be other than decorous would not be permitted. I have heard of engagements being broken off by parents just because the young man was not so proper and 'weel-behavit' as he might have been.

An old saying was "Love has nae law"; and its approaches were carefully guarded. 'The maiden's tocher' was generally supposed to have been kept in view; and therefore the process of engagement was carefully preceded by inquiries, and was prolonged into months, and perhaps years. "Maidens should be mim till they're mairriet," is a north-east proverb reflecting this feeling. And another that used to be often heard some fifty years ago has it: "Maidens' tochers and ministers' depends are aye less than they're ca'ed."

But love overrides caution and this was more the exception than the rule. There is a lovely story of a Donside of a shepherd and his Highland lassie.

The methods of 'proposing' are endless. Donald adopted a mode which, so far as I know, is unique. "Maggie, I want you sair; but I've to speer this at ye first, what can ye dae withoot?" "What dae ye mean, Donal'?" she asked, in surprise. "I mean, can ye dae withoot fine claes an' fine dishes an' fine furnitur'?" The loving reply was, "I can dae withoot a'thing but yersel', Donal'." The matter was closed at once. It struck me forcibly that Donald was a true philosopher and went to the very heart of things. Walt Whitman, dwelling in his plainly furnished boathouse and living independently on mean fare, could utter all his mind courageously to dollar-hunting Americans. Kepler, too, could finish his work and say, "I have written my book and it will be read sometime. But it can wait for its readers, and I can do without them meantime. Has not God waited six thousand years for me to contemplate His works?" The story in David Copperfield of the young loving couple in London visiting the grand West End shops and saying to each other, "How happy we are though we be poor; we can do without all these fine things," illustrates the truth that the Donside shepherd held. To learn how to do without many things while they have the one thing, a true love, is what to-day is greatly needed by young people. We should have more marriages and happier were there more brides like Maggie.

An old parishioner, when in a tender mood brought about by a protracted conversation regarding her mother's deathbed, suddenly made me her confidante as to "what micht hae been my fate if it hadna been itherwise determint." Her father was a forester in Banffshire and was proud of his position,

since it sometimes brought him into the company of gentry visiting at the mansion house. A young ploughman of excellent character began to pay attentions to the daughter, and one day ventured to say, "Leesbeth, you an' me were surely made to gang thegither; we've sae muckle in common." Her reply was, "I dinna ken aboot that, but ye wad need to see ma mither." She took him home and introduced him to the mother, who gave him a very kind reception. But when some months afterwards the proud gamekeeper heard of it, he frowned and forbade it. "Hoo cud a clodhopper like that fellow daur to speak to my dochter?" were his words. By this time, however, the two young folks were deeply in love and really engaged. The young man, forbidden to enter the house, wrote affectionately; but the mother, afraid of a serious quarrel, managed in the daily absence of the daughter during the forenoon hours, to catch the postman and to burn the letters. The result was a total cessation of correspondence, and the young man, broken-hearted, emigrated. On her deathbed, the mother confessed her foolish action and piteously begged the daughter's forgiveness, saying, "Aifter a', Leesbeth, it's a serious thing to be mairriet, and ye're maybe better as ye are." "And what did you say?" I asked. She replied, "I just said, 'Ay, mither, it's a serious thing to be mairriet; but as I ken weel, it's a serious thing nae to be mairriet.'"

Sir William Robertson Nicoll, who knows Scottish ways and manners very intimately, and who has a lifelong acquaintance with that wonderful parish, the Cabrach of Banffshire, tells the two following excellent stories. A certain Cabrach farmer in his youth asked a woman named Charlotte to marry

him. Charlotte refused him with scorn, and he found another bride. After a time his wife died, and he proposed a second time to Charlotte. She again refused him still more scornfully. As he said, "She fuffed an' blew at me." He married another, and was again left a widower. A third time he went to Charlotte, who was now advanced in years. She accepted him with alacrity. As he said, "Fa' was franker than Charlotte?" They were married, and she outlived him.

An elderly man, the day before his marriage, said to the bride, "Noo, Meggie, gin ye binna as willin' as me, ay, yea an' williner, I'm nae seekin' ye." She did not reply like Mr. Benson's heroine, "Utterly and entirely and absolutely proud and happy and content!" They speak more tersely in the Cabrach; she was 'williner,' and the nuptial knot was duly tied.

It is told of the Cabrach people that in the early part of last century they did not encourage education on the part of the girls, so that they might not be able to correspond by letter with sweethearts. One farmer's daughter, who could not write, got a neighbouring farmer's wife to do it for her, and in this manner regularly sent a letter to her lover at sea. But the sailor did not want the matter to be longer delayed, and wrote with definite proposals requiring a concrète answer—Yes or No. She much desired to send an immediate affirmative, but felt considerable delicacy in confiding this important step to her neighbour who had hitherto written for her. She thought the whole answer could be conveyed by the two words "Oo ay" (Oh yes). As the first word, pronounced Scottish, sounds the same as 'oo,' meaning wool, and the second sounds

the same as 'eye,' she felt assured that if she sent an eye in wool, Jack would instantly understand her meaning. Accordingly, wrapping up the eye of a haddock, got from a fishwife from Buckie, within a small piece of wool, got from her father's sheep, she sent it by post, and Jack did not fail to read the right interpretation. For long in the Cabrach girls were teasingly asked, regarding any young man who conveyed them home, "Have you sent 'Oo aye' to him yet?"

Dean Ramsay tells of an old humorous minister who prefaced the ceremony by an address to the parties. "My friends, marriage is a blessing to few, a curse to many, and a great uncertainty to all. Do ye venture?" No objection having been made, he then said, "Let's proceed." I think the good dean must have mistaken a joke, perpetrated at the manse when the young man called to arrange the service, for what was said at the ceremony. I do not think any minister of the Church could have been guilty of such a breach of good taste and decorum at the ceremony itself. But at the déjeuner, or luncheon, or tea, after the marriage, I have heard speeches made of all kinds by both ministers and laymen, many of them of the most extraordinary character.

One of these was to the following effect, and I need not say it seemed to be out of keeping with the 'atmosphere' of the luncheon-table at which it was told. A minister was visiting at a house where he had recently married the couple, and found the husband alone. He soon discovered that their temperaments were not congenial nor compatible, and that serious differences had arisen. But he strongly counselled moderation and patience, trying



to assure the young man, from his knowledge of the wife's antecedents, that all would yet come right, and adding, "Whenever your temper gets the better of you, John, remember the word, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.'" "Thank you, minister," replied the husband, "but the warst o't is that when I resist her, she flees at me."

My nephew was formerly minister of a parish in East Lothian, and he tells the story of a lady and gentleman whom he met at the country station there, and who had at that moment arrived by train from their wedding in St. Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh. Knowing him, the married couple asked him which hotel he would recommend to them? The lady said they had had a little difference on the way down, she desiring to go to the cheaper temperance hotel and he to go to the more expensive Grand Hotel on the Links. The husband interfered somewhat sharply, saying, "I really want to know, sir, which of us you think is boss of this new co-partnery on which we have entered to-day. Am I superintendent and chairman, or is she?" With great wisdom and admirable tact the lady herself quickly intercepted the answer: "My dear husband, of course you are boss and superintendent and director-general of this concern; all I want is to have the humble office of treasurer."

There is in Scotland a very strong prejudice against a younger daughter getting married before her elder sister or sisters. A young farmer once proposed to the second daughter while the first remained single; but the father at once objected and told him the reason. "It wad brak Mary's market if Jean gaed first—I cudna 'gree till't." "But marriages, ye ken," said the young lover, "are made

in heaven, and nae by order o' birth." "Oh, it may be they're made in heaven; but heaven canna be against the auldest lass gettin' first aff. That's surely heaven's order." He had to consent; and finally married the eldest, who proved an excellent wife.

The minister of New Pitsligo, now enjoying a well-earned retirement, tells me the following. The tea-party following the marriage of a farmer's daughter was being held in the capacious corn loft adjoining the barn, access to which was had by a wooden stair. A commercial traveller who sold manures was present and had imbibed 'ower muckle o' yon,' to use a Buchan phrase. After the usual toasts were over he insisted on making a speech, in which he proposed the minister's health, and said that he and that gentleman were both good speakers, and might yet be in the House of Commons. The minister thanked him, and jocularly said, "Yes; we are both likely to go there, for we are both teetotallers, and the House of Commons needs such men." "That's true," shouted the other emphatically. The minister then left, along with the bride's father; descending the trap-stair that led from the loft. There they heard the loud voice of the 'Commercial' shouting, "Pass the bottle; it's a gweed thing he's awa' noo." The minister at once returned, and said, "What's that my friend's saying? I'm surprised." Half-drunk as he was, the knight of the bag drew two long breaths, and gathering his wits together, replied, "We're a' terrible sorry ye're gaun awa', sir. Will ye no' bide wee?"

A married sister gave her brother, a farmer, a good deal of trouble about his matrimonial matters. She did not want him to marry, because she hoped her

own son might come to inherit his fine farm and stocking. One day she was pestering him in the usual way. "Are ye engaged, Duncan, to Jeannie F——? A'boday says ye are. Is't true?" The patient, long-suffering brother replied, "Bide a .wee and ye'll see for yersel'." This only stimulated curiosity, and next time they met the inquiries were even more persistent. He had to fend for himself as best he could. At first it was simply, "I canna answer yer questions." But the young lady whom he was courting, when told of his trials, suggested a better answer—"Weel, I'm sorry I canna yet annoonce the event. I'm no' permitted." He used it without seeing that it really committed him, which was what the young lady herself wished.

Rarely does one find an unhappy couple married. Satirists speak much of such cases, but I have seldom found them. The great mass of married people are very happy and contented. Where this is not so, dissipation is usually at the root of it. A few such miserable homes I know, but even there I often receive the excuse from the loving wife, "He's the kindest o' men when he's sober, sir." A crusty old bachelor once called my attention to the vast number of words in the language that began with the prefix *dis*, as 'disappoint,' 'disannul,' 'disgrace,' 'dispute,' etc. He thought this sprang "largely from the mistakes of married life." I differed from him by whole diameters. It is in public and political life where these abound. It is to the green pastures of their home life that men, tired of strife, gladly return for rest and soothing peace; and it is there that they find them.

The wives of two farmers in the north were discussing the question of the benefits of marriage for

ministers. They both agreed that, on the whole, the married man knew life much better, and could speak on the privileges and duties of home with more knowledge than the bachelor. Then, turning their talk to the Roman Catholic cleric, one of them said, "It's a peety the priest canna tak' a wife. She wad dae him an unco lot o' guid. She nichtna be a better hoosekeeper than the lass he has, but she wad dae ae thing that nane ither can—she wad gaur him see that he juist *nicht* mak' a mistake!" This was the Scottish way of saying what Lord Shaftesbury said, "Had the Pope only got a wife he would soon come to disbelieve in his so-called infallibility."

My friend, the late Rev. Alex. Harper of Wishaw, who paid a yearly visit to his native Banffshire parish, told the following story, illustrative of social manners and habits. He was conducting a marriage service in a mining village, at the beginning of which he asked for a Bible with clear print. After a long search no Bible could be found other than a tattered school copy totally illegible. After the service, when the marriage certificate had to be signed, he asked for pen and ink. The house had no such articles, but a boy was sent to the grocer's shop for a penny bottle of ink. When brought it was found to be corked, and the cork covered with sealing-wax. He had then to make his third request: "A screw, please, to extract this cork." Instantly no less than twenty-six big pocket-knives with screws on the back of them were offered by young miners present at the ceremony. No Bible, no pen, no ink—but twenty-six corkscrews!

I knew a farmer and his wife who formed the most wonderful mutual admiration society I ever entered; all unconsciously too, for deep affection lay behind

their whole talk. He often began with, "She's a wonnerfu' wumman, sir; she's up ear' and she's doon late, and a' the day she's working for me and never tired; there's nae mony has got sic a blessin's I got at ma mairriage." And Janet's reply was as unvarying as the husband's kind commendation: "Hoots, gudeman, haud yer tongue; it's aye yer ain wife wi' *you*; I'm juist ashamed o' ye. But for a' that, sir, he's the best man I ever kent, if only he wad haud his tongue aboot me." When she was taken away, the husband, though a finely built and physically powerful man, drooped and dwined away. He told me he watched the nightly sunsets from his west window over the lovely Moray Firth, where the king of day so majestically dips behind the hills of Sutherlandshire. He liked to look at the setting sun, and to go to bed every evening sneaking to himself of the hope of reunion, and repeating the proverb: "The e'enin' brings a' hame." It reminded me strongly of Frederick Myers' words:

"What can we do, o'er whom the unbeholden  
 Hangs in a night with which we cannot cope?  
 What but look sunward, and, with faces golden,  
 Speak to each other softly of a hope.  
 Still tho' our Daystar from our sight be taken,  
 Gone from his brethren, hidden from his own,  
 Yet in his setting are we not forsaken,  
 Suffer not shadows of the dark alone."

The one and same truth has burned itself into the heart of the cultured spirituelle poet and the unsophisticated farmer. I'm not sure, however, that the latter had not in him the eye of the poet. Love had opened to him the inner eye which is the bliss of solitude.

The people of the parish of Marnoch are a fine

steady race of farmers, and greatly reverence the place of their birth. Like Barzillai they prefer to abide among their own people and be buried by their fathers and mothers. An old crofter lost his wife, and was sincerely mourning her departure to a neighbour, who exhibited his sympathy by calling and by talking of everything except the wife. But the crofter would revert to his loss despite the neighbour's kind desire to take his mind off the subject. "I miss Jess sair; she was a grand wumman; there's nae her marrow in Marnoch." "But, Robbie," said the neighbour, looking about for some observation that might lessen his sorrow, "ye maunna mourn her ower muckle; she wasna a hereaboot wumman, ye ken—she was a Huntly body, nae the true Marnoch."

Exemplary wives are found in every parish, but not many have attained the honour of getting their virtues inscribed upon their tombstones. The parish of Alves, in Morayshire, contains in its churchyard a stone with the following brief but emphatic testimony to a wife's genuine goodness. It bore the date of 1590.

Here lies  
ANDERSON OF PITTENSERE,  
maire of the Earldom of Moray,  
WITH HIS WIFE, MARJORY,  
whilk him never displicit.

Could there be a finer epitaph to a good wife from a good husband?

## CHAPTER XII

### SOCIAL LIFE IN THE NOR' EAST

A COUNTRY doctor in the north of Scotland one evening met the sexton with the maut somewhat aboon the meal and next day talked to him about his habits. "Dugald, if you're a wise man you'll give up your dramming. You're a public officer, and you should be an example to all." "Weel, sir," said Dugald, "I winna deny that I tak' a dram noos and than. But, doctor, I've happit up mony o' your mistak's amo' the mools, and maybe ye'll noo hap up mine and lats be quits." The gravedigger's humour had its reward.

A young harum-scarum lad had left his home, and, after various experiences of a shady character, had enlisted in the army and gone abroad. Returning from India as a corporal, he was very proud of the distinction he had gained, and in his native village every one was careful to call him by his military title. At the annual examination of the parish school by the Presbytery, as was then the custom, he went in with a few of the parents to hear the scholars go through their Bible lessons, and was recognised by his old minister, who, in addressing the school at the close, referred with pleasure to the presence of an old scholar "who was now wearing the Queen's clothes and was one of their braw

sodgers." The young coxcomb was offended, and interrupted, "I'm no common sodger, sir, I'm a corporal." "Weel," continued the pawky minister, "Geordie's a corporal and no sodger; but we'll hope he'll no discredit his auld schule for a' that."

In the spring of 1886 I took for a short time in Egypt the place of a chaplain who had recently died. Colonel Green, afterwards Sir William Green of Aberlour, Speyside, was the officer commanding the Black Watch, and in the regiment there were many fine specimens of Scotsmen. Sometimes our fresh meat was very scarce, and the young officers would go out and shoot quails round Luxor and Assouan. One very hot evening, when returning with their birds, they sent on in front one of these Scotch soldiers, a great favourite with his superiors and a most obliging man. He was met by a bumptious officer, who complained to the tired soldier that he had not saluted him. The Scotsman at once replied in quite a deferential tone and in perfectly good humour, "Weel, sir, if ye'll just haud my quails for a meenute, I'll pit my hand to my heid." We joined heartily in the laugh, and Sandy, by a unanimous vote, got a brace of quails that night to his own supper.

A political lecturer came round the coast, beating loudly the Socialistic drum. A shoemaker, infected with the same political microbe, urged one of our crofters to go and hear him, for "he was a born orator." The crofter went and heard of many plans that would do wonders for the working man, and all at the expense of other people. His good sense, however, would not let him accept the wild communistic programme. "It's aisy," he said, "cuttin' yer clath wi' ither folk's sheers and mendin' yer



sheen wi' ither folk's leather. Born orator? I just said to mysel'—born ass! Want o' wit mak's some folk donnart! He'll better nae gut's fish afore he gets them."

A political election was going on, and one of the candidates from England approached two electors, young fishermen in a little fishing village on the Moray Firth. "How do you do?" he said. "Just having a little crack with each other, I see." "Ay," was the quiet reply. "Now tell me," he added, "what do you mostly do here during the year?" "Oh, weel, there's fishin' an' there's courtin'," they replied. "Yes, yes, how beastly jolly," said the Englishman. "Fishing and courting! Yes, beastly jolly! But what do you do in the stormy weather when the boats can't get out to sea? What do you do *then*?" "Weel," said the fisherman, "we juist stope the fishin'."

There is a proverbial saying, not uncommon in these parts, which affirms that "men mak' hooses but women mak' hames." I got a fine illustration of it from a ploughman, a middle-aged man, who was getting married and was being much chaffed about his pending change in life. He gave his reasons in very striking language. "I've bothied noo for sax years, and as sure as death I'm rael tired o't. Whan I gae hame to my mither's hoose a'thing's sae canty an' clean, an' a'body's sae kind tae me, I canna bide awa' frae it. But in the bothy a'thing's sae caul' an' bare, an' the langige sae roch, and the bannin' and the dammin' frae mornin' tae nicht, I canna bide it. 'Deed, sir, there's mair quaetness amo' the nowt nor amo' the men. A byre's a quaeter place than a bothy. So I jist said to masel', 'Tak' a wife an' mak' a hame: the aul' Buik's nae vrang.' As I've

heard ye say yersel', sir, the mairriet life's the model life. Ay, ay, better aiven a puir wife than ill company."

Throughout Banffshire among the crofters are to be found many instances of the benefits of the boarding-out system. Orphaned children from Glasgow and other cities are sent to the upland parishes of the county to be boarded and educated there. Some are social derelicts from wretched homes which turn out only hooligans, weaklings, and wastrels. This preventive work is excellently done by the crofters, and much social wreckage is saved. One old woman grew so fond of the boy she had brought up from infancy that, when the Glasgow inspector spoke of sending him away, she would not listen to it. "He's as guid as ma ain son," she argued; "I wadna pairt wi' him on nae accoont." "Then we must stop further payment," said the man of business. "Gae awa' wi' yer pyement; d'ye think yer Glesca siller can buy hert's bluid?" was the reply. "But the boy is not yours, mistress," said the inspector. "Weel," said she, "I've been mither and faither till 'im for acht year noo, an' we canna pairt; he's mine juist as muckle as the calf or the stirk is mine. I brocht them a' up thegither." "But the sheriff will determine otherwise," said the man of law. "But I'm as detèrmint as the sheriff," said she. "An' the laddie bides wi' me, sheriff or no sheriff." Her argument prevailed. The boy also wished it; and it was for his good.

It is with great difficulty still that we can get people in the country to believe in having fresh air in their sitting-rooms and bedrooms. Box-beds are very slowly vanishing, and many people, not poor, prefer them to the open and airy uncurtained bed-

stead. An old woman, confined to her box-bed with a diseased hand, actually had small curtains hung up in front of the narrow aperture, restraining still more the circulation of fresh air. The doctor, after vain attempts to persuade her of the injury they did, one day, while she was sleeping, cut them down and hid them. She was very angry and would not see him again, saying, "I wad raither he had cut my fingers aff than cut my curtains doon." An old fisherman whom I urged to keep open the window of the small attic where he slept, only replied with a smile, "Hoots na, sir, I've plenty o' caul' here and dinna want mair o't. Ye dinna want me tae pairish, do ye?"

Speyside is the country of many clans, the upper part of it embracing the land of the Macphersons. An English tourist was travelling to Newtonmore, and on leaving the train he dropped his waterproof coat on the platform, and an hour afterwards went back to inquire about it. Seeing no one about, he opened the door of the waiting-room, where he heard much talking, and asked the occupants of it whether they had seen anything of a dark mackintosh. The reply was instant. "Na, na! there's nae Mackintosh in this room. We're a' rale Macphersons here."

This reminds me of a similar story from the Borders of a century ago, where a beggar woman, unable to get any charity from what she considered the hard-hearted inhabitants of a village in Roxburghshire, shouted at the last door of the village, "Ye're nae deservin' o' the name o' Christians!" To her surprise the people were not a bit affronted, but quietly replied, "Na, that's true; we're a' Elliots an' Airmstrongs here."

A story is told in Edinburgh of a certain Mr.

D'Oyley who, having gone south, strongly objected to his name being pronounced in two syllables, and desired his friends to call him De Oyley. Not long after, at a dinner-party, his humorous host addressed him after the desired pronunciation, and asked, "Mr. De Oyley, will you have some of this sweet de umpling?"

Mr. George Seton, advocate, tells of a Dublin citizen of the name of Kenneth Halfpenny whose family, when he had prospered in trade, wished him to change their name to one less common. He declined to do so, but when the honest grocer died, they put on his gravestone the name of Kenneth Halpin. The son, who became wealthy, had been reading Scott's "Lady of the Lake," and found there the euphonious name of Alpin. Accordingly he soon ceased to make use of the initial H, and the lad who on the streets of Ireland's metropolis had been known to the message boys as Kenny Ha'penny, appeared now at the levees as "Kenneth MacAlpin, the descendant of a hundred kings!"

There's an old proverb which says, "Twa canna quarrel if ane winna." An old man told me he resolved on his wedding-day that his wife and he "shud never hae nae words," and he made sure of peace in the home in the following manner. They agreed that if she saw him in anger she should go outside the door and stay there for ten minutes, and if he saw her angry he should do the same. It was, he said, a perfect cure. He could say with truth and with much satisfaction, "Jess and me never quarrelled. We juist had to gang oot ance or twice. Aifter that we never again said an angry word to ane anither."

\* The citizens of the county town of Banff, through

a bargain with Lord Fife, had for many a day the privilege of getting salmon at a much cheaper rate than they were sold at in the open market. Many a grilse was bought on those profitable terms, but before the grilse began to arrive it was difficult to sell a large salmon, few families being numerous enough to consume one. Neighbours would combine to make the purchase, or it was sometimes possible to persuade the lessee of the fishings to divide the fish in two and sell a half. But this was much to his loss, since he got the whole fish sold in London at a much higher price. One lady, who had a big purse, but was careful of it, went to him and said, "Weel, John, hoo are ye sellin' the half salmon the day?" John, however, was in no mood to oblige. "When I catch only half-salmon in the Deveron I'll lat you and yer folks ken."

A working joiner was one day called to a manse for the purpose of repairing a broken pane of glass on the side of the manse from which the cold north winds blew. The minister remarked to him, "It's wonderful, Sandy, what a strong draught can come from such a small hole." The joiner was very fond of tall talk, and had acquired a number of singular phrases. He replied in his own peculiar style, "Ay, ay, sir, but ye ken the sma'er the aperter the bigger the velocity!" The minister expressed his astonishment at such learned words, and the reply was instantaneous, "Ye maun oonerstan' a jeiner needs to be a man o' science nooadays."

One day a travelling menagerie was passing up Fiddichside. Belonging to it was an elephant, which at an open gate strayed into a field of turnips at the roadside, and began to pull the leaves with its trunk, to the great amusement of the urchins. One boy,

overwhelmed with astonishment, rushed to the door of his home, shouting, "Come here, mither, come here, an' see the showman's coo pu'in' the neeps wi' her tail."

Shortly after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* a student from Aberdeen University went home to his parent's farm. The father, anxious to get the news of the university, said, "Weel, Donald, fat are they sayin' at the colege aboot this new theery that we're a' come frae the monkeys?" "It mak's nae difference tae me," replied the young man, "whether my grandfather was a baboon monkey or no." The old farmer was silent for some time, and then slowly said, "It mebbe mak's nae differ tae *you*, Donald, but it wad hae made an awfu' differ tae *ye* gran'mither."

On a spur of the Knock Hill resided once a crofter who in a dry autumn season could not provide sufficient grass for his cow. Accordingly he took her to the top of a neighbouring hillock covered with young heather, and left her there, tethered, in the hope that she might, like the sheep, be attracted by the young growth. A neighbour in passing, noticing this unusual phenomenon, remarked, "Fa ever heard o' a coo eatin' heather? She'll stairve on the tap o' that hillock." "Weel," replied the crofter, "she mayna get muckle tae eat, but she'll hae a gran' view o' a' the Grange, and maybe winna sae muckle miss her meat."

A not uncommon name in this corner of Scotland is the family name Dow, which is locally pronounced Doo. The common pigeon or dove gets a similar pronunciation from the natives. A witty Banffshire laird one day entered the shop of a grocer of this name, and addressed him in the following terms:

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"Well, Mr. Doo, how do you do, and how is Mrs. Doo, and Miss Doo, and all the young Doos?"

"We're a' dooin' rael well," was the caustic reply. "Muckle thanks to ye, sir, for speerin sae kindly for a' the Doos. They'll maybe tak' a gey bit flicht some o' thae days, an', at ony rate I'm shure they'll nae be like the 'ill bird that files its ain nest.'"

A servant girl at a farm was invited to a ball in a hall of the adjoining village. At these balls the dancing used to be promiscuous, but on this occasion the committee resolved to introduce a little more care than usual. In consequence they printed programmes, which proved a puzzle to not a few of those who went to dance. On returning home to the farm her mistress asked the kitchen-maid how she had enjoyed herself. "Oh, nae ava'. I never aince danced, for a young scoonrel cam' up an' insulted me." "Dear me," said the lady, "how's that?" "Weel, he cam' an' speert if my programme wis fu'; and me had just hed naething but twa oranges an' a tairt."

A little boy was taken by his mother to a tea party at a farm on Ythan side. He had not been taught to restrain himself, and, seeing a grand feast before him, began at once with the buns and biscuits. This drew from the hostess the sensible remark, "Noo, Geordie, ma lae'die, grund weel on the oat-kyakes, and keep the gentle breed for the tap."

A very sympathetic lady was one day calling on a hard-working crofter, who, though his croft was a small one, yet always contrived to make ends meet and to bring up a large family of clever children. He was laid aside from all work by an acute attack of rheumatism, and his visitor kindly expressed her deep regret at hearing of his being in what she termed

'great distress.' The last word to his ears had, unfortunately, a legal sound, making him think of a sheriff's warrant, and he replied with some warmth, "Weel, mem, I hae been sufferin'; but there's been nae distress. I houp I'll never come to that." The remark recalls the story of a somewhat similar misunderstanding. A friend of the late Mr. James Baird of Gartsherrie and Cambusdoon met him and sympathetically said, using a common expression, "I am very sorry to hear, Mr. Baird, that you have been complaining of late." The rejoinder from Mr. Baird was instantaneous and in his native and strong Doric. "I hae been ill; but I never complain." The answer was thoroughly characteristic of Mr. Baird, one of the most sincere and upright of men, and one of the greatest captains of Industry that Scotland ever bred.

Every one knows the peculiar provincial dialect which once was spoken by the natives of the beautiful Granite City. Boots are 'beets,' and shoes are 'sheen,' and use is 'eese.' To-day that provincial dialect has largely died out. But it prevailed some fifty years ago, when a worthy Aberdeen merchant went up to Edinburgh, on business connected with the Court of Session, and put up at a Princes Street hotel. Towards morning a cry of "Fire! Fire!" arose and wakened him. Hastily drawing up his bedroom window, he saw a policeman hurrying along, and in a loud voice asked the blue-coated officer, "Far ees't?" (Where is it?) Supposing this meant that the fire was in the east end of Edinburgh, the policeman hurried away in that direction, only to find he had made a mistake. Returning quickly to his beat, he observed the same nightcap at the hotel window shouting out, "Far was't?" (Where was it?) This was too much for the honest bobby, who burst out



into indignant remonstrance, "You big liar! You told me a minute ago it was east, and now you tell me it is far west! You be hanged!" It was a lesson Aberdeen has not forgotten. That old dialect is now all but extinct. Only in out-of-the-way places and among old people can we find it.

Two Strathdon shepherds, more accustomed to the ways and the food of Glenbuchat than to those of the Laighs of Aberdeenshire, were driving their patient flocks down by Inverurie to winter pasture. They had never paid for a meal in Strathdon but in copper. Entering a small inn near Inverurie the elder of them said, "We're needin' some breid and some cheese, and a drink o' something. What's yer charge?" "Sixpence each," replied the maid. "Och! it's ower muckle," said Donald, "will ye no tak' saxpence for the twa"? "No. I cannot." "Weel, I'll gie ye seavenpence." "No, no." "Weel, surely ye'll be pleased wi' aughtpence." "No, it's impossible." "Verra weel," said Donald, ending the talk, "we maun just try some ither place where they're nae sae haughty wi' their charges and dale in honest copper."

Matter-of-fact people are met with everywhere. They have great difficulty in seeing a similitude; and any symbolical or poetic language gets from them the most concrete interpretation. In such instances the descent from a beautiful thought to mere bathos is immediate. Two Aberdeenshire farmers met on a lonely moor near the Tap o' Noth. The one, a man who had read much, used in the course of the conversation a phrase from Longfellow's "Psalm of Life," "Yes, David, but we must not be like dumb driven cattle in the strife." "Na, na," said David, "I dinna want tae be a nowt. Naebody was thinkin'

about cattle." Such minds cannot help keeping near the ground; and all abstractions suggest only the well known and the commonplace.

In this connection one always thinks of Sir Walter Scott, that princely mind with the brilliant fancy and playful humour; and then of his good, loving, but prosaic wife, to whom, when in view of a field of sheep and lambs, Scott exclaimed, "'Tis no wonder that poets in all ages have made the lamb the emblem of peace and innocence." "Indeed," rejoined Lady Scott, "they are delightful animals, especially with mint sauce!" Where habitual contiguities predominate in a mind, mint sauce is invariably recalled by the mention of lamb. To a soul that gives free play to similes, the word 'lamb' calls up very different ideas. To 'rapt Isaiah' there comes quite naturally the image, "He is led like a lamb to the slaughter." To the gentle mind of Lawrence Sterne came the thought of God's kindness, "He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." To the tender and sympathetic soul of Longfellow the word suggests a totally different image.

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,  
But one dead lamb is there;  
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,  
But has one vacant chair."

A young man living with his father had been for some time paying his addresses to a servant girl at a neighbouring farm. As time went on, the visits became more frequent; and, though he was always welcomed, no other encouragement was given him. He could endure it no longer, and at last said in a querulous tone, "Maggie, wasna I here on Sunday last?" "Oh ay," she said. "And wasna

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I here on Wednesday nicht, and on Freday nicht ? ”  
“ Oh ay,” she again said. “ Weel, Maggie, dinna ye smell a rat ? ” Maggie looked somewhat frightened, and peering round about the barn in which the courtship went on, “ Whaur’s the rat ? ” she cried, “ I’ve an awfu’ horror o’ rats.” “ Oh, I thocht ye wad ken what I meant,” said the wooer. But by this time the girl had fled in terror, and the affair ended.

The parish of Forgue in Aberdeenshire is locally known as ‘ The Kingdom of Forgue.’ It has certainly a distinctive quality of its own, and not a few stories about some of its ‘ characters ’ are told by ‘ A Herd Loon.’ One is concerned with the strange doings of a cadger who in the fishing season drove down to Macduff once a week and took home a cartload of fish. Not infrequently through Robbie’s indulgence the old horse would reach home without its master ; and when this happened the wife quietly stabled the beast and housed the cart in its shed. On one occasion Robbie’s overmuch nip made him feel sleepy, and he lay down in the cart among the fish and slept very soundly and comfortably, while the horse travelled home. Hearing the wheels, Robbie’s wife looked out, and seeing no sign of him, unyoked the horse and put him in the stable. Some hours after, Robbie woke up in a bewildered state. He looked about a little and then said, “ If I am Robbie Morrison, cadger, Brae o’ Gerrie, I’ve lost a horse ; and if I’m no Robbie Morrison I’ve found a cart.” Robbie crawled out of the cart, made his way to the window of the house and knocked at it. “ Who’s there ? ” cried his wife. “ Is Robbie come home yet ? ” inquired Robbie. His wife, thinking it was one of the neighbours, and wishing to screen

her husband, said, "Oot, ay, and in his bed sleepin' lang syne." "Hurrah!" exclaimed Robbie; "I've found a cart! I've found a cart!"

A Banffshire crofter, an old soldier and a pensioner who had come back with honourable wounds and a brave spirit to the old home, proved a somewhat intractable tenant to the laird. The other tenants had followed what was deemed "the sensible habit of votin' wi' the laird," and always learned how to cast their votes from the forester, who first made inquiries at the factor in respect to all parochial problems and political questions. The old soldier had more independence, however; and when he was found to have voted on School Board questions against the laird, who was a major in the army, he was called upon by the ground officer and advised to be 'sensible' next time. The soldierly spirit could not endure the objurgatory note of the menial, and his reply was quick, "Tell the laird that though I'm sojer-clad, I'm major-minded; and if he has a min' o' his ain, sae has his tenant."

Not long ago I was addressing a Band of Hope connected with a city parish church. Telling some humorous stories in connection with the subject and as illustrative, I was very much struck with the alertness of these town children and the quickness with which they perceived and appreciated every point. It was doubtless the result of the excellent teaching now given in the schools of Scotland. One of these anecdotes I had related to a marriage party of farm servants the previous week, but the point was missed by nearly all the company, and I am afraid that some of them thought I was making fun of them. The quick perception of young Scotland is now very gratifying. It is a sign of progress;

and recalls to one the story of the young Englishman at the Westmoreland Lakes who, in the company of two married Scottish couples, tried to be humorous and witty in his way, but failed to provoke any laughter. Losing his patience and forgetting his good manners, he remarked with some tartness, "It does seem that Scotchmen don't see a joke unless it be bored into them with a gimlet." But the Scottish repartee was quick, "Yes; but your gimlet, sir, wad need to be better pointed than your joke."

A fine, warm-hearted wife, married to an excellent farmer; was talking to another wife about husbands, and wondering what the word meant. The other explained the etymology of the name and quoted the old rhyme:

"The very name husband, what does it say?  
Of wife and of household, the band and the stay."

"Weel, noo, I never thocht o' that," she rejoined. "I maun learn yer verse and say't to Weelum; for I just aye ca' him my man, and there's naethin' ava in that. Weelum will be mighty when I say 'my husband.' He'll hardly ken himsel' in sic a gran' word."

An Englishman, of much humour, came to Sutherlandshire one summer, and took up his quarters at a hotel which many old Highlanders daily visited, offering their services in connection with the trout fishing. On the day following his arrival he was accosted by several of these, asking whether he did not know this and the other "gentleman frae the Sooth," whose boatman they had each been. As they spoke only Gaelic fluently and English badly, he determined to 'take a rise' out of them.

One who was very pushing, came in for a fall of an unusual kind, to the great delight of the rest of the company. "I suppose you know Sir Richard ——?" "Yiss, I do; and he gave me a certeeificate too." "Indeed; a good one?" "Yiss; verra good." "So, so; and I suppose he spoke of you as an unmitigated and unadulterated scoundrel?" "Yiss, yiss, sir," he replied, in a tone of triumphant satisfaction. "He did that, sir." The newcomer had gone beyond the scope of the Highlander's English vocabulary.

One of the finest farmers I ever knew was an old bachelor. He had worked hard and been successful. His byre stalls and stable trevisses were covered with innumerable variegated 'first prize,' 'second prize,' 'reserve' tickets of cattle shows. But though every one spoke of him as so successful, he lived in the most homely manner and in a house which was barely and meanly furnished. By the neighbours he was spoken of as 'near' and 'miserly.' Yet I knew it was not so. He had in his early life loved strongly and deeply; but he had not declared his love, when alas! the young woman became engaged to a distant relative and soon married. She had several children, and then both parents died. Through a mutual friend, and without his name for a long time being revealed, the farmer paid for their education and upbringing and left himself barely enough to carry on his farm. I came to know this explanation and spoke of the nobility of his action; but he waved away my words, modestly saying, "Na, na, sir! I've nae lost by my luv. It's made a man o' me. I wad likely hae been a puir windle-strae o' a crature but for't. Dinna peety me. It saved me frae slippin' on

mony a sliddery road, it did. I've a puirer hoose, but a richer her't for't a'." I conceived a great admiration for him. Before his death I saw him much, and thought him one of the truest gentleman in the whole district. Yet by the whole neighbourhood he was misunderstood. It had to be. The story could not be told in public. That most loving and liberal soul was to his dying day deemed a miser. It must often have cut him to the heart. His last words abide with me, "Them that suffers maist says least."

A genial old crofter, the very soul of contentment, was cited on one occasion as a witness in the Banff Sheriff Court in the time of the late learned Sheriff Gordon. He was asked by the Procurator-Fiscal where about he was at the time of the accident upon which the prosecution founded. 'I was in the street,' was the reply. "And were you not driving the cart that collided with the lorry?" asked the man of law. "Na," said the crofter. "Why, you said so a little ago." "Na, I didna." "Well, my ears must surely have deceived me; I'm sure the whole court heard you. Will you swear on your oath you did not say you were driving a cart?" "I will." "What, then, in all the world were you driving?" The crofter replied, "I was jist drivin' ma horse." Both bench and bar broke down at the unexpected answer.

The following story I can vouch for. It is native to the soil of Banffshire. A son had been born to the daughter of a farmer, but the paternity was kept a profound secret. The neighbours, however, had their own ideas, and all shrewdly suspected a fine-looking, handsome young man in the neighbourhood. The bellman's wife called one day, and seeing the

child she began admiring him greatly. "Eh, bit he's a bonnie bairn," she said, "an' sae like his father." Then suddenly remembering that she had said too much, she hastily added, "whaever he may be."

In a northern training college some twenty-five years ago the venerable rector was addressing the students on the valuable and powerful properties of fresh air. Then followed the usual illustration to drive home the lesson. "I remember," he said, "when I was a young man climbing a hill in Braemar, in company with other two students. How strong the ozone was up there! And, would you believe it, before we got to the top we were quite intoxicated." At this a lady student, foolish enough to think to escape his eagle eye, made a remark to her neighbour. "What did Miss D—— say to you just now?" the rector peremptorily demanded. The student hesitated to give away her companion, but an "Out with it!" followed which brooked no delay. "She wondered, sir, if you had taken the 'mountain dew' with you," replied the young lady in trembling tones. The loud applause from the male students in front saved the situation, likewise the lady student from a private interview later in the rector's room.

The word 'duck' is in Scotland generally pronounced the same as 'duke,' with a consequent confusion of meaning. A very kind ducal proprietor was riding along the road when he recognised one of his poorer tenants attending a pair of very starved looking horses which were endeavouring to pick up some food on the roadside. "How are you fending, Donald?" his grace asked; and the cottar's voice trembled as he spoke of hard times. The duke kindly



shook hands and slipped a piece of gold into Donald's palm. Overcome with gratitude the poor fellow blurted out, "They ca' yer grace a duke; but ye're ower big a man to be ca'd that. Ye should be ca'd a goose by a'body that kens yer kindness."

In many parts of the North of Scotland the terms east and west were in general use to represent, as to direction, the right side and the left side. Much confusion resulted from this conversational peculiarity among people who were not acquainted with it. One of our fishermen at Lowestoft had managed to patch up his topcoat by sewing on some buttons which were placed awry, so that the coat looked very one-sided. Some English fishermen joked about it, and pointing to the garment, asked who was his tailor? "Juist my nainsel'," was the reply. "But look at your buttons, man." "Hoots," said he, "they're a' richt—juist a bittie to the east." It reminds me of a story told in Inverness of a minister in a sequestered rural parish who was noted for careless habits in regard to his dress. On a neighbour meeting him on the turnpike and remarking that a part of his dress was unbuttoned, he replied with great naïveté, "My servant lass shuid on the buttons, and she put them on ower far wast."

Some years ago in the north we had a very wet summer which spoiled the hay and threatened to lay or lodge the barley and oats. The widow of a crofter, left with only her boy to help, was struggling hard to make the best of her few acres and to get ends to meet. But August brought sunshine, and the crops matured well, while the potatoes, on which she depended so much for the pigs and the poultry and

her own table, gave an excellent return. The grateful woman, with the last of them safely stored, remarked to her boy : " Eh, laddie, they've been a gran' crap, an' we canna be ower thankfu'." " Na, mither, an' we're nae," replied the lad, thinking he was endorsing the parental mind that there had been no superfluity.

A parishioner went over to Morayshire to spend a Sunday with some wealthy relatives who kindly asked him at the Christmas season. He knew the husband and wife a little and had always found them very polite, but, as he said, " Ye never ken fowks till ye bide wi' them." He reached Elgin, and his nephew had a comfortable cab awaiting him at the station, and took him home to evening dinner, which to him was an unwonted meal. The wine and the good food revealed some hitherto hidden traits of character in his host that he had not suspected. A game of cards gave an opportunity to the young ladies of exhibiting themselves in a fresh light. At the Sunday morning breakfast they appeared very late, and had not quite finished their toilet before arriving at table. A little rift within the lute appeared during the meal and widened out a little more on the way to church, where, over the choice of the prayer-cushions, the fairer sex came to words and surly looks. At lunch things worsened instead of bettering, and the old man and his host were glad to escape alone for an afternoon stroll. By evening mother and daughters had arrived at their usual manners, being no longer able to keep up wonted appearances to outsiders. Indeed, my old friend was appealed to as arbiter in the quarrel—an office which he declined. " I thankit them an' said na, for I saw I micht get the reddin' stroke if I gaed in atween the

hizzies and their mither." Ere evening worship came the atmosphere of the Sabbath evening, which ought always to be the warmest and kindest, had become chilly with mutual coldness, and the talk had degenerated into spiteful gossip, that made the family prayers sound very unreal. My friend was very glad to get home on Monday, by which time the father and the two daughters had a little difference. When I saw my friend and got the story, he said, "I'm gled I lived three days wi' my gran' freens. I never kent them richt afore. There are angels *and* angels, ye ken, sir—some white and some o' anither colour. But, sir, ye never ken fowks till ye bide wi' them."

In Aberdeenshire the Gordons 'hed the guidin' o't'; but in Banffshire for nearly two centuries the Duffs have been the ruling race. Their rise and progress was told in *The Memoirs of the Duffs*, written by William Baird of Auchmedden, about the year 1770, and recently, in *The Book of the Duffs*, the history of the family has been recorded in two handsome volumes. Some of them had very large families; one, Patrick of Craigston, having no fewer than thirty-six children by his two wives, while William of Dipple, near Fochabers, from whom springs the main stem, now represented by Princess Arthur of Cornaught, and Duchess of Fife, had fourteen children. They seem all to have been remarkable for their shrewdness and acquisitiveness, and many of them gave distinguished service to the country in military and diplomatic posts. A story is told of one of them, the Laird of Braco, and is here given as it was told to Baird by his nephew. "A sturdy beggar, having heard that the laird had picked up a halfpenny from the street of Banff, came

up to him craving an alms, and saying, 'God bless you, Braco; gie's a bawbee; and if ye winna gie's a bawbee o' yer ain, gie's the bawbee that ye fand.' 'Find a bawbee to yerself,' said Braco."

Braco's ability and fondness for adding acre to acre proved a great blessing to his descendants; but it evoked considerable envy and detraction among the other lairds who were gradually being supplanted by the Duffs. It is said that John, Earl of Kintore, added a new petition to his prayers, "Lord, keep the Hill of Foudland between me and Braco."

In a north-east village, where busy folks reside and many poor but thriving families eke out their living by keeping pigs and poultry, it happened on a Christmas Eve that the father of one of these got the worse of liquor. He had gone to a ball, and instead of dancing had indulged 'not wisely, but too well.' Very early in the small hours of the morning he vainly endeavoured to find his way homeward. The village has no streets, but only winding paths among its houses, which were originally built in the most higgledy-piggledy manner. At last, as the Christmas morning dawned, he appeared among his family. "Whaur hae ye been, gudeman?" asked the wife, whom he answered in a woebegone voice, "I hinna been oot o' pigsties the hale nicht."

The same village has a stone pillar, something like a miniature of the Round Tower of Brechin, but at the top it is unfinished; and in order to protect the summit from the effects of rain, the village carpenter was instructed to make a conical wooden top, and to paint it green. He carried out his instructions, and, amid the congratulations of the village, placed the

wooden top on the tower. But a few hours afterwards rain came on, and he went out and took it off, lest the shower should wash away the wet paint. The joke has never been let down upon the villagers, "Has the toor got its tap on the day, or is't aff?"

A prim maiden lady in Banff, who lived to a great age and maintained her youthful feelings into the eighth decade of her life, used to propound to strangers the singular question, "Can you guess how it is that, though I am over eighty years of age, I have seen only twenty birthdays?" The apparent impossibility was easily solved, though few guessed it. She was born in a leap year, on the 29th day of February. It gave her great delight to propound this paradox to every newcomer: "I'm really and truly only twenty years of age. What do you think of me?"

An old cottar in the parish of Ord, whom I knew well in the seventies, had an extraordinary faculty on all occasions of uttering Scotch proverbs. I found that his mother had taught them to him when young; but he had cultivated the gift, and delighted in it. It certainly gave his speech a wonderful flavour. The salt was in almost every sentence. He seldom opened his mouth but some bit of proverbial wisdom escaped. Even on the road, or when I met him in the town on market day, we never parted but I got, "Noo fair fa' ye: and that's nae fleachin'" (no flattery).

The late Dr. Samuel Davidson of Wartle, Aberdeenshire, one of the grand old country doctors who were worth their weight in gold to rural parishes, was distinguished by a pawky humour which made him a universal favourite. It was said that his

humour and happy disposition went as far as his medical skill, which was not small, in working cures among his patients. With patients of a melancholic temperament he dispensed more mirth than medicine, and they confessed that in this he was wise. Called one day to see an old woman who suffered from her knee, he duly prescribed. But knowing that there was very little the matter with her he was in no hurry to pay a second visit. When he did at last call, the woman saw him coming, and at the door greeted him in the following manner: "Ay, ye're a gye doctor never to come back to see me. I micht hae been deid for a' that ye kent." Her house was full of blinding smoke and far from tidy, and she continued, "But nae maitter, doctor, I'm better, tho' nae thanks to you. I juist sent for a box o' Holloway's Ointment, for it cures a'thing." "A'thing, d'ye say," asked the doctor. "Ay, does't—a'thing," was the answer. "Weel, then," said the doctor, "if it cures a'thing juist gie a guid rub o't to yer lum." With that he left her laughing at him, and had quite gained the day.

Another old lady, who took a very gloomy view of her constitution, was treated in a similar manner. When sent for he at once saw that she was not seriously ill, although she imagined herself at death's door. He observed that she was sleeping on an old-fashioned four-poster bed with very high feet. Before prescribing any drugs the doctor exclaimed, "Weel, if ye *should* dee, ye winna hae far tae gang!" She saw his meaning with reference to her high bed, and began to laugh. He kept her in a state of mirth during his whole visit, and her cure began forthwith.

With neuropathic patients the Doctor dealt after

his own manner. He knew how largely their complaints were imaginary. An elderly relative went to him, speaking dolefully of what he deemed a sprained ankle. For a time Dr. Davidson talked on the weather, and then on things in general, in order to discover his state of mind. Then suddenly he asked him "Weel, what's the matter with you?" "Oh, it's my ankle," was the reply. "Let me see it." This was done, and the doctor walked three times round the room watching his patient all the time, and then burst out, "Take a good stiff tumbler of punch before you go to bed—that's the cure for you." It brought him sleep, and nothing further was heard of the sprained ankle. The doctor believed that people of a dolorous and melancholic temperament first of all needed plenty of sleep, and then required to be cheered and enlivened. On the other hand, no physician in the north was ever more eager to bring the most recent results of science to the aid of his patients, and none was more attentive. At his funeral one of the oldest parishioners of Rayne said of him, "That was the best man I ever kent. Neither day nor nicht did he spare himsel' whaur onything was really the maitter wi' me or mine."

Two farmers of the old school were one winter night, over their toddy discussing the merits of the doctor, who, though living in a small clachan, was really doctor to some eight large parishes. "Oor doctor's ane o' the richt skweel. Soond him ony wye, he's true, the auld doctor." "Ay," said the other; "he's a wee bit highly strung ye ken, but he's a gran' man, and upright, and as true as steel." "Yes, all the qualities of my new Broadwood piano," said the young musical daughter at the farm.

"Weel, lassie," said her father, "I dinna preten' to ken muckle aboot yer pyana, but I ken the doctor's a gran' man, an' he aye plays the richt game, an' that's the only kin' o' music I care for. I like the aul' Psalms, an' the aul' tunes, an' the aul' doctor. They 'gree wi' my stamack far better than yer new-fangled pyanas."

An English gentleman, accompanied by his talented wife, was accustomed to visit the Avon, a tributary of the Spey, every March, where he rented a few miles of trout and salmon fishing. The natives had for the most part spoken Gaelic in their youth, and did not know more than the simplest words of the English tongue. Far less did they, true blue Presbyterians, know the divisions of the Church of England Calendar, or of the Christian Year. The wife often accompanied her husband to the riverside, and an old Highlander attended on the gentleman. Donald thought the lady, coming from the centre of fashion, wore very plain garments, and could not contain himself. "Your wife is a verra nice leddy, and is verra moadest in her dress," said he. "Yes," replied the gentleman, "my wife always likes a plain dress, but especially at present. You know, Donald, it is Lent." "Och, surely no', sir," said the old man. "Yes, it is," said the other; "it is Lent, Donald. Do you not know what that means?" "Och, och," said Donald, "I ken weel aneuch, but it's no' the truth you'll be tellin' me, but a joke, sir." "Really, Donald, it is truth," said his employer. "Weel, sir," said the man, "I wadna hae believed that the lady borrows her claes. If that be sae, what aboot the Duke's rent for the waater?"

There's a story of a crofter who had been at Dufftown trying hard to get the banker to extend favours



and permit him to overdraw his account at the bank, and then to pay certain creditors who were unwilling to wait till the coming rich harvest should give him the withal to settle their accounts. He had been successful, and returned home with the good news to his thrifty wife. The minister had meantime called and been kindly invited to stay to family tea. He saw the farmer arrive, and, going to the door, he beheld him convulsed with laughter as he looked at his collie dog whirling round in pursuit of its own tail. The reverend gentleman could not see the cause of this wonderful risibility, and looked perturbed. The good farmer understood in a moment. "Och, sir!" he said, "ye maun forgie me; I cudna help it. To think o' me spending a day in Dufftown trying to get accounts sattled, and then see the dog at the same wark, trying to 'get er.ds to meet,' it coves a'! Ye'll be sayin', 'Like maister, like dog.'"

The other day a laird was visiting one of his crofters, who threatened to appeal to the Land Court, and wished to know the cause of his discontent. He paid a rent of £6 for some seven acres, and wanted it reduced to £3. The laird took a sensible neighbouring crofter along with him, a mutual friend, and asked about the crop, and the poultry, and especially about the price which the tenant had got for the season's litters of pigs, which this neighbour had taken in his cart to the distant market and sold for the crofter. "And how many pigs had you, Sandy?" "Oh, weel, juist ten and syne eleven," was the answer. "And what price did you get for them?" the laird asked. "Juist aboot twenty-five shillins the heid," was the reply. "Well, Sandy, that's over £25 for your sow's pigs alone; or five times your

rent. Do you really think it too high ?" "But ye forget, laird, hoo muckle they cost me to feed them." "Whisht, Sandy, man," cried the neighbour. "Ye ken I sell't them as sookin' pigs nae mair than aucht weeks auld."

## CHAPTER XIII

### RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE NOR' EAST

THE stories which follow illustrate mainly the religion and the traditional faith of the north-east of Scotland. If in some cases that faith exhibits itself in feelings and experiences of an unusual character, still it is a faith that really tries to apprehend man's relations to God. Men have very different ways of expressing religious feelings; but all the same the religious sentiment is a reality with these people. They have a religious fear, a religious love, and a religious joy directed towards one supreme object. Upon their common storehouse of emotions their faith draws largely, and the impression it makes finds very full and forcible expression amongst them.

There are, on the one side, the cautious Scottish temperament and the dull lethargic mind that do not care to permit religious impressions to find their normal reaction in express words or devout speech. They stand at the extreme pole from the revivalist and the religious psychopath. Not that their religion is unreal, but that it finds expression only in moral action and Christian life. On the other hand, not a few, and especially the fisher-folk, are neurotic in temperament and believe in the visions of which all religious mystics have had experience. The one class is very apt to misunderstand the other, and even

to condemn it as irreligious. A close study of each reveals the fact that both may be healthy, or either may be morbid types, of religion.

One of the sincerest Christian farmers that I ever knew in Banffshire scarcely breathed a word about his faith. Yet he was a daily student of the Bible, and a church elder of unblemished reputation, the very soul of kindness to his neighbours and of honourable dealing in business. All his conceptions of religion passed into action; and whenever he got a new idea he was never at rest until he gave it practical expression. "I maun wark it aff," he said. "Some folks say, 'What d'ye think o't?' But I say to masel', 'What maun I do wi't?'" I used to think he was obsessed with the thought of duty. In him the sense of responsibility held all lower cupidities in check. Had I only known of it before his death, I should have had great pleasure in reading to him a portion of the autobiography of Mrs. Besant, in which I found some passages that almost repeat verbatim what I had heard him say. "Plenty of people," writes Mrs. Besant, "wish well to any good cause, but very few care to exert themselves to help it, and still fewer will risk anything in its support. 'Some one ought to do it, but why should I?' is the ever re-echoed phrase of weak-kneed amiability. 'Some one ought to do it, so why not I?' is the cry of the earnest servant of God, eagerly springing forward to face some perilous duty." These words exactly describe the effective practical genius of this farmer. Yet Mrs. Besant, unlike my friend, would have had little difficulty in understanding the Scottish fishermen and fisherwomen, who without the slightest difficulty give ready voice to their religious emotions.

In our County Hospital many 'characters' are to be met with ; but I never met with any one so strangely marked with lines of individuality as a henwife who came there in the 'eighties' with a serious complaint, of which, however, she got completely cured. Her gratitude she marked by a small gift of money to this charitable and most useful institution. "But bide till I get hame," she said, "an' I'll lat the fowks up Fiddichside hear o' this fine place." She was henwife at the castle, where a very wealthy but somewhat parsimonious family from England then resided, and she found her opportunity in an unexpected way. The parish minister had been preaching on the use and abuse of money on Sunday ; and the lady of the castle, not relishing it overmuch, asked the henwife on Monday how she liked the sermon. The latter did not remember much of the sermon, but the text dwelt in her memory. "Weel, ma leddy, I canna say muckle aboot the sermon, but I mind the text weel—'Riches mak' themsel's wings an' flee awa' like an eagle.' " "Well, Janet," said the lady, "is it not wise to hold by them firmly and not let them escape ?" Janet suddenly saw her opportunity. "But wad it nae be better," said she, "to clip their wings, ma leddy, an' sen' the feathers doon tae Chalmers' Hospital, whaur there's forty beds sair needin' featherin' ?" It had its effect ; for lovely haunches of venison came to the hospital so long as that family tenanted the castle.

An aged man in my parish was a model church member, and, although unable to help in any active work, he greatly aided me by his continual intercessions. He would modestly say, "I canna visit or teach the young ; but I can gang ilka day to the Throne o' Grace." Whenever in his later years he

had to take a certain nauseating medicine, he uncovered his head, stood up, and reverently asked the Divine blessing on it.

Another sincere crofter, whom I knew in 1874, told me that, in going to sow seed in spring-time, he always took off his cap in the field and said, "Now this seed I'm to pit intil the Lord's hands, and He'll tak' care o't." It reminded me of the story told by Dr. Alexander Hodge of America, once assistant to that illustrious scientist, Professor Joseph Henry, who fifty years ago experimented much in electricity and used the earth for the return current. "When the testing moment came, he would raise his head reverently and call on me to uncover my head and worship in silence, because, said he, 'God is here, and I am about to ask Him a question.'"

"I can see St. Nicholas steeple ilka Sunday," said a Deeside farmer to a friend. "Hoo's that?" asked the visitor. "Weel, I think it maun be because on Sundays Aberdeen has nae smoke frae its factory chimneys." "I wish," said the friend, "I could use all my Sundays similarly for getting a clear vision of what points me upwards and lifts me there." "Ay," rejoined the farmer, "the Sunday's a gran' day for levellin' up."

A very loving couple lived on a small croft near Banff. They were God-fearing and pious, and very anxious about the separation which death might bring. The wife began to decline in health, and this made her talk to the husband about the future. "I ken ye love me, Jeems, and I can dee quite happy. Dinna fear I'll be far away frae ye. And be sure, Jeems, I'll wait for ye. Never forget that, my gudeman. Hooever far awa' I am, I'll be waitin' for ye, Jeems." When she was taken away the old

man felt this a very great comfort. It were well if all husbands and wives were as frank in their communications and as unrestricted in their confidential talks about the future of their Christian hope. Scottish reticence, however, seldom permits such confidences. It is illustrated rather in the case of the farmer who on his deathbed confidently said to his wife, "I aye liket ye, Jean, wi' a' ma hert, but I never could tell ye o't afore."

An aged schoolmaster told me that the first deep religious impression made on his young mind was in a feeling-market. It seemed so extraordinary that I begged him to relate the story. He was a reticent man on religious topics, but after some persuasion he gave me the following singular narrative. He had gone with his friends to Keith 'muckle market' a week or two before the Whitsunday term. The market was a rendezvous for all and sundry; farmers who went to fee their ploughmen, and their female servants; itinerant merchants selling stools and caups; weavers offering their webs of 'fingrams' (the wool of the small native sheep spun and converted into webs); packmen selling prints and clothes of all gaudy colours; others offering songs and ballads to while away the winter evenings in kitchen and bothy, and cheap book literature of every possible variety; while shows and games of all kinds, and drums and brass bands, and "slicht o' han' men" divided the attention of the lads and lasses. Towards evening the drink began to have its effect and the mirth became fast and furious, the younger men often getting into the hands of the police.

It was towards six o'clock of the summer day when the babel of sounds had reached its height that my friend, then a boy in his teens, was looking on with

wondering eyes at the drunken riot which the police were trying to quell. Behind him, forming part of the Square, stood a large house, and on a platform in front of it were three masons, busy at harling and whitewashing. One of them, a middle-aged man, was gazing at the riotous, swearing, surging crowd with a pitiful eye, and then in my friend's hearing, as though soliloquising, said, "Awfu'! awfu'! What a mercy that God commends His love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The words so quietly uttered, made a very deep impression on my friend. "No sermon up to that time," he said, "had ever impressed me. But this gospel went straight to my heart. I never forgot it, coming from a working mason and in such surroundings. To this day the impression is as vivid as it was sixty years ago."

A fine old honest farmer on Donside was brought to his deathbed. He had worked hard, brought up a large family, been an elder in the church, and saved a little to leave to his sons. He called them round his couch and talked of many things, how they should be kind to their mother, and affectionate to one another. "And aye keep a hame for the family," he urged in tender accents, "a hame o' yer ain that a' the lasses can come till wi' a right. And I leave ye a' that I hev. It's nae muckle, but it's a' clean money, and there was never a lee tauld in the makin' o't. The blessin' o' the Almichty will gang wi' ilka plack o't." It did. The clean money brought prosperity to every son and daughter of that Christian home.

An aged parish minister was taken ill. He belonged to the old-fashioned school that did not give much utterance to its deepest feelings; not



because these men did not possess a deep emotional life with its relative reactions, but because religion was to them so sacred, that they were guarded in their expressions about it. He had lived like Abraham "to a good old age and full," when one day he found he could not rise from bed owing to an affection of the heart. The doctor was sent for, and communicated the fatal character of the disease to a relative, who, stooping over, told him there was no hope of recovery. He roused himself to reply; and with a most serene face and beautiful smile he said, "Well, if it is God's will; then it is also my will." Could life have a finer conclusion than this, when truly said and felt?

There lived in Banff in the eighties a member of the Church who, in his days of retirement, read much and thought independently, but said little. In the last year of his life he read almost nothing but the Bible. As a young minister, I somewhat dreaded visiting him, and yet was much drawn to his sick-bed by his thoughtful conversation. He would sometimes not converse, but simply ask questions. These were perfect 'posers,' involving the deepest metaphysical theories and touching on many a theological heresy, so that I felt unable to give fully satisfactory answers. His thoughts had led him along much of the line followed in Descartes' *Discourse on Method*. Without any training in philosophy or any other study of metaphysics he had reached the Cartesian position of a positive experimental act as the necessary basis of all knowledge. On the infinite duration of time and space he dwelt much, and was fond of hearing what Immanuel Kant had said on these great subjects. One day he surprised me by saying, "I never felt

sae muckle that my ooter man's perishin' an' my inner man's renewing. I like Paul's verse aboot that. My body's juist fa'in' awa' and my inner man's waukenin' up mair than ever. My body was never sae weak as noo, and my mind was never sae strong." On another occasion, following the same thought, he expounded it in farmer fashion. "We're juist like the seed corn we plant. I've aften ta'en aff the husk and scrapit the seed, but I never foun' out the little bit livin' thing inside. But plant it; an' it's that bittie o' life that grows and thrives as the shall perishes. That's what I feel noo. The shall's perishin' and I'm growin'. I am nae the shall; and the shall, it's nae me. An' some day I'll be able tae dae without it."

A parish minister was very anxious to reach one of his farmers in order to win him to the good habit of church-going. All his persuasion, however, had failed to get the man to attend service along with his excellent partner in life. The wife and the minister accordingly arranged that the latter should come to a dance at the farm, so as to show that he could enjoy social life, and that he had no sympathy with the extreme Puritanism which frowned upon amusement and forgot what the farmer called "the need we a' hae o' a bit o' senseless recreation," and that:

"A little nonsense now and then  
Is relished by the wisest men."

The minister went to the dance and led the farmer's wife into a reel and then to a schottische. As he was pirouetting through the latter, very nimbly and to the great surprise and utter astonishment of the half-tipsy farmer, the latter held up his hands and exclaimed, "Weel, weel! this dings

a'; it's clear oor minister haes begun his eddication at the wrang end."

The Scriptures do not so much affirm as they assume the primal instincts of our human nature. They always seek to build the higher love of heaven upon the lower loves of earth. A young man told me he never knew what faith or prayer meant until he lost his godly mother. The gap in his life was so great and his affection for her so deep that it drew his soul Godward, sent him to his knees and his Bible, and made a new man of him. At first he greatly doubted if his religion was genuine, and was afraid he merely worshipped his mother's memory. However, despite the dark hints of an unwise friend of the 'unco guid' kind, he became convinced that through his filial affection he had been drawn within the circle of Divine love. He found much encouragement in a quotation from Saint Bernard which assured him that "the love of God has its primary source and best origin in the deep loves of home and childhood." There are many who may so trace their spiritual genesis.

I had often attended the sick-bed of an old parishioner who had strong religious convictions and also individual preferences or tastes which he was not slow to express in language coloured by a good deal of caustic humour. On one occasion he said abruptly, after the Scriptures had been read, "I want you noo to gie me the Lord's Prayer." I expressed my readiness to do so. "An' I dinna want that lang word 'trespasses,' for it's nae in my dictionary. Ye taul' me ye dinna like 'debts,' because folks mistak' its meanin'. But I want 'debts' put in, an' I maun hae the Lord's Prayer,

and nae ither, unless (with a very sly look) ye think ye hae some better ane o' yer ain."

The Rev. John Skinner, author of *Tullochgorum* and a native of Deeside, became schoolmaster of Monymusk, and eventually, at the age of twenty-one, episcopal clergyman of Longside, near Peterhead. He had a very youthful appearance at his ordination, and overheard a member of the Church remarking, "It's surely nae that beardless loon that's to be oor minister." On the following Sunday, in consequence of this observation, Skinner opened his ministry by preaching from the text, "Tarry ye at Jericho until your beards be grown." The sermon proved to be an excellent exposition of the value of wisdom and experience in the ministry, and itself foreshadowed Skinner's fruitful ministry.

A farmer on Deeside went to consult his minister regarding the second boy of the family. "Andrew," said he, "canna haud a horse's heid dacently; and as for the pleuch, he juist blaads the grun'. But he'll dee brawly for the college." "And what," said the minister, "would you have him turn to after college." "Weel, his mither and me thocht he micht mak' oot for a minister." "And what aptitude has he shown for the sacred calling?" asked the other. "Weel, I dinna ken aboot his awptitudes, but he's a fell reader o' buiks and poetry, and fat ither cud he turn tae?" "He might be a good teacher," said the reverend gentleman. "To manage bairns?" said he in surprise. "Na, na! Robbie cud nivver dae that! We'll juist mak' him a minister."

A very different side of this subject is presented in the following anecdote. An old lady, whose nephew had been long in a small mission station

without getting a charge of his own, said to him one day, "Jeems, why did you think of becoming a preacher?" "Because I believed I got a 'call' to the work," said the nephew. The kindly old lady looked lovingly at him for some time, and then in a gentle tone she put to him the question, "Jeems, are ye quite sure it wasna some *other* noise that ye heard?"

Some years ago a clever lad was going from one of the best Banffshire schools to Aberdeen University, where he had won a bursary. His minister urged the hard-working parents to bring before the boy's mind the high claims of the ministry, but they warmly resented the suggestion, the father replying, "Whaurever he gangs he'll nae gang there. There's naething but creeticism for ministers nooadays, and nae son o' mine's gaun to that. We'll mak' him a doctor or a lawvyer, and syne he'll be as crouse as ony o' his creetics." More than once of late I have heard this same objection to work in the ministry made by parents.

Another and a finer side of the question came within my personal knowledge. A farmer's widow was left with two boys and a girl. She was a very pious woman, and in prayer she dedicated the youngest boy, who showed much talent and love of learning, to the sacred ministry. The boy did not know of this, and only discovered it by overhearing his mother's intercessions for him in her little room. This produced for him such a sense of unfitness as to compel him to say in a confidential moment to her, "Whatever I'm to be, mother, I canna be a minister." The good mother still continued at her prayers for the boy, and at last said, "Charlie, the Lord's tell't me ye're to be a minister."

"But He hasna tell't me, mother," said the boy. "He'll tell you some day," she replied, "juist bide His time." He did. That boy got a very distinct call, and is now a preacher of the Church of Scotland.

The late Professor Flint of Edinburgh was a theologian of great learning and dialectic skill. He was also a powerful preacher, and when he entered a university pulpit his hearers were deeply impressed with the force of what one called 'living logic on fire.' One December he was preaching in the College Chapel at Aberdeen, his subject being, "The doing of the Will of God," which he expounded with great power and noble eloquence. That sermon won two young medical students for the mission field. One of them returned at Christmas to his home, and astonished his parents by saying, "I have got a call to India." "Wha called you, Donald?" they asked. "It was God that called me, through the voice of Dr. Flint," was the reply. The good people all knelt down that night round the family altar and thanked God for the honour put upon them and upon their son.

A small farmer's son who tended his father's cattle on the hillside was very fond of study. Though he had left the parish school after beginning Latin and Greek, he had not lost his love of learning while at work. Every spare hour was employed on the Classics and on English literature, and whatever book he could beg or borrow was read through and its contents stored in his excellent memory. A keen desire possessed him to get to the sacred ministry, and one evening it so overpowered him that he started on a midnight journey to Aberdeen, some eighteen miles distant. Reaching it in the morning, he repaired to the New Market, where second-hand

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booksellers kept their stalls, and asked for a copy of the Greek New Testament. The bookseller showed astonishment not unmingled with scorn, when a couple of students entered and, hearing the boy ask further, questioned him about his studies. They urged the bookseller to bring the Testament, who accordingly threw it on the table saying, "See, man, read that book in the Greek to thae men, an' you'll get it for a saxpence." The offer was too good to be rejected. The lad acquitted himself to the admiration of his judges, and carried off the book in triumph. Within two years he was at the University Bursary Competition, and within other eight years he was a preacher of the Gospel.

The late much-beloved minister of the parish of Glass was visiting his parishioners, and in the course of that visitation he entered the house of an aged woman who belonged to another religious body. Seeing her infirmity, he proposed, before leaving, to offer prayer, but she declined his services. "When I want a prayer," she replied, "I hae ma ain minister tae dee't for me." "Still," said the reverend gentleman, "I should like to help you in your need. If you won't have my prayers, will you take this one-pound note?" "Weel," she answered, "I raelly canna refoose the bit paperie." Ever afterwards he was a welcome visitor.

The Rev. John Murker, of Banff, a man of much force of character and ability, was an ardent supporter of the London Missionary Society, one of whose fields of enterprise lay in the island of Madagascar. When Mr. Murker fell into depressed spirits, as he sometimes did in old age, his kind and aged house-keeper knew the invariable cure. She would bring him in a cup of tea, and would add, "Noo, Mr.

Murker, dinna lat yer speerits doon : juist get yer books and gae awa' to Madagascar."

At the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance in Aberdeen in 1913 many eloquent speeches were made. The biggest man from the West was supposed to be the well-known author, 'Ralph Connor,' and he was kept to the end so that the audience might be induced to stay. He soon saw that they were tired, and he wisely introduced himself by saying that after so many good speeches he felt like a New Yorker who, meeting a Boston friend, said, "You can always tell a Boston man when you meet him." "Yes," said the other, "but you can't tell *him* much." "So, after all these speeches," said the speaker, "I feel keenly I can't tell you much either." His speech was a brief one. It was not so brief, however, as that of a temperance lecturer who went to address a rural meeting and was introduced by the chairman in one long speech and by the secretary in another still longer and covering the lecturer's whole ground. The people were very annoyed and wearied of this, and the lecturer, at last permitted to begin, just as his trap drove up to carry him off to his late train, said, "Ladies and gentlemen, my time is up, but my address is to be found on the pledge cards handed to you, and now I have the pleasure to wish you all good-night."

Something similar to the above, but with a much more pathetic note in it, took place in Banff in 1875. Messrs. Moody and Sankey, the American evangelists, had paid a visit to the town and very much stirred up the spiritual life of the people. This led to a large weekly prayer-meeting being held in the Y.M.C.A. Hall. At the close of one of these meetings, somewhat protracted, and in which many had



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engaged in intercessory prayer, the chairman asked two more brethren to close the service by praying "very, very shortly." It proved too much for an old fisherman, who suddenly stopped in a very fine and fervent petition by saying, "Lord, I canna say mair, but juist tak' the meanin' o't. Amen." We all thought it was the finest petition offered at that meeting.

A minister had announced at the Sunday service that on the following Lord's Day there would be a flower service in the morning, and a solo would be sung by an eminent tenor at the evening service. An old elder absented himself from both these services, and on his minister meeting him sometime afterwards, he said in strong tones, "I didna gang tae the kirk on Sunday." "Were you not feeling well?" said the minister. "Na, it wisna that. It was juist that I was thinkin' that a floo'r show in the mornin' an' a concert at nicht's nae my idea o' the Sawbath."

A vacancy had occurred in a Speyside Parish Church. Two candidates had been voted for, and feeling ran very keen. At the Elgin market two farmers met, and fell to talking of it. "Who did ye vote for, Sandy?" said the one. "I votet," said the other, "for the lad that's gotten't." "But I'm tell't," said the first, "that the ither lad was gey gude tae." "Weel," said the second, "it's like this, ye ken, oor Maggie's hoosemaid up at the big hoose whaur the candidates were bidin'; an' Maggie tell't me that the ither lad socht a bath every mornin' that he was there. Noo, ye ken, we maunna hae a minister that's gauen tae be unweel like that, so I juist votet for the ither lad."

Swearing was a common habit of the Nor' East,

but it is now slowly vanishing with the progress of education. It is heard only among the more illiterate type of farm servants and of dock labourers. Speaking of it a farmer said to me, "They hinna ony ither words, ye ken, to lat oot their thochts but by damns. It's a' a want o' words." Travelling one day in a train on Deeside, I was pained by the vulgar oaths of a soldier. On expressing my astonishment at one who wore the King's dress doing this, he said, "I'm sorry, sir; it's an old habit I learned from my own father, but we soldiers like a strong word to get out our strong feelings." It is on the same principle that the navvies and dock labourers fill their mouths with awful expletives which seem to liberate their thoughts. The habit is probably less a vice than the result of a lack of adjectives. If they would only think of it, they might rather follow the example of Dean Swift and use the resources given by Euclid, which the Dean made use of to the Irish fishwife: "You isosceles triangle! You quadrilateral parallelogram! You square of the hypotenuse!" The geometrical jaw-breakers dumbfounded her. She only exclaimed, "May the Almichty forgive yer Riv'rence!"

A fisherman desirous to avoid a breach of the Third Commandment said that he found it very helpful to get hold of one or two very big words to allow him to give vent to his feelings; and the best words he could get were from the Bible—the fine explosives being the words 'Jehoshaphat' and 'Nebuchadnezzar'; the latter he gradually shortened into 'Neb,' to our great amusement. Englishmen swear by St. George, and Irishmen by St. Patrick. It seems strange that Scotsmen do not make use of St. Andrew's name. But for some

reason or other the patron Saint is practically unknown in the Nor' East.

At the examination of a public school on religious knowledge I had to examine the written papers and decide the prize list. One of the questions put to the competitors had reference to Daniel and the king's dream. The spelling of this king's name puzzled one pupil who, like the man above named, wrote simply 'Neb.' Probably she had heard of the use made of the name by the humorous fisherman.

I was once conducting a service in a country parish church, and had to read a lesson from the Epistle of St. Peter, which speaks of false teachers "who shall bring in damnable heresies." The strong adjective struck a little boy with amazement, and he whispered to his father, "The minister's say'n' bad words." They spoke of it again at home, when the mother added that she was sure the minister would say it in a nice way. The boy suddenly turned to his father, and said, "Father, ye sometimes say't yersel'; noo, ye shud juist say't in a nice wye." The result was good; the father broke off his foolish habit.

A young girl recently came home from an English boarding school. She had acquired good manners and learned the proprieties; and felt astonished when she went to her old church with her parents to hear the minister read with strong emphasis the verse, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." At once the sanctity of the place was gone for her, and she asked her mother on the way home if she had heard the dreadful word. On being told that the minister was reading Scripture, she remarked, "Well, then, he could just have said 'H' with a dash, as the novels put it, and we should all have known what he meant."

Three parish worthies stood by the village pump, straightening out with ease all the knotty problems that vexed the souls of kings and counsellors. A young couple sauntered past, quite oblivious of their surroundings, the girl's eyes fixed in rapt attention on her lover's face. "That reminds me," said the smith, his eyes following the couple. "Ay," interrupted the hen-pecked shoemaker, "but it winna be lang like that wi' *her*." "Hoo d'ye ken?" said the tailor, himself a bachelor. The two benedicts exchanged looks full of meaning. This suggested to the last speaker to propound the question, "Why girls should change so much after marriage?" "Maybe," said the smith, smiling, "they fin' oot we're nae sae gude as they thocht." "Ma ain belief is, it's a' pretence wi' the hizzies at the beginnin'," said the souter, with lively recollections of his wife's sharp tongue. "Weel, weel, I canna say masel'," said the man of no experience, "but it looks gey like as if the minister spiles them a'."

A simple creature in a small village was in the habit of speaking much to himself as he carried messages in a basket from a merchant's shop to the houses of customers. It became so much a habit with him that when he went to church he was not able to restrain himself, and gave vent to his remarks especially between the pauses at the end of each verse of the hymns. The minister kindly remonstrated with him for speaking so much to himself, and said he should speak only when he met sensible people. His reply was surprisingly sudden, and showed an unsuspected power of repartee. "Weel, sir, that's juist hoo it is; I like aye to speak to a sensible man, an' sae I juist speak to masel'."

When I first came to my northern parish, there

was a family of well-dressed children who, with their father, were most regular worshippers in the parish church. Wet or dry as the weather might be, John and the bairns were always present. But the wife never came to church except at the Easter communion. On calling one day I expressed the hope that, although I knew her to be tied down with home duties, she might manage to get John to stay at home in turn and allow her to come with the children. She politely said she thought she was doing better service by keeping the house; and in explanation gave this singular reply, "Weel, ye see, I aye like the soond of yer bonnie kirk bell. When it rings it aye says, 'Gang in, gang in, gang in'; and I jist say that to John and the bairns ilka Sunday. And tho' I dinna gang masel', I'm jist a kirk bell for ye a' the same." I gave her my cordial thanks. Many years after I found that Dean Stanley in visiting Pope Pio Nono at Rome had been asked about his friend, Dr. Pusey, at Oxford. Stanley informed him; and then the Pope said, "Dr. Pusey has been the means of sending a good many of his countrymen into our Church; but he is like a church bell, he sends in others without coming in himself."

At a farmer's house in this neighbourhood, a tea-party met one afternoon. The farmer's wife was a quiet and reticent person, thoroughly upright, and one who detested all evil gossip. I had to call on some trustee business, and soon found myself among a party of kindly people. The farmer and I were talking together, when suddenly, at the other end of the table, the voice of the gudewife was heard firmly, though not loudly quoting a proverb from the Bible, "As the churning of milk bringeth forth butter; so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife." There

was instant silence. Every one felt the force of the word of Inspiration. The whole atmosphere became purer. The husband loyally took his wife's side by adding, "Ay, ay, leddies, ca' the kirk as mickle as ye like; but dinna stir up strife."

Two farmers were coming out of church. One of them had by skill and greed made a good deal of money; he owned his farm, and with it got a front seat in the gallery of the parish church. "Naethin' like money!" said he to his neighbour in the kirk-yard, "the bawbees can bring ye onything, John; a braw wife, an' a fine steppin' mare, an' the best seat in the breist o' the kirk." "Ay," said John, "an' mair than that!" "What mair, John?" said the former. John spoke softly, "A hard hert, an' a prood heid, an' nae muckle in't."

The wonder and glory of the world appeal to all. It's spectacle of order and beauty comes home, however, to some hearts more than to others. A farmer was one day, during hay cutting, eating a hearty luncheon under the shade of a beautiful and umbrageous plane tree. He ate from a plate on the grass at the end of the fragrant clover field, as did also his men not far off on the same field. At this moment the lord of the manor passed, taking a slow afternoon walk outside his policies. Too polite to interrupt the meal of his tenant, and yet too affable to turn aside, he said without stopping, "Well, Thomas, you are dining." "Yes, my lord," replied Thomas, elevating his hand in token of respect and glancing upward to the glorious summer sky, "an' I have a gran' dinin'-room and a bonnie table spread for me, wi' the scent o' the clover and the sang o' the birds, and fat mair cud I want?" "Yes, Thomas, and a good appetite to enjoy it all. There's many a laird

would willingly change places with you if he might." And his lordship walked quietly on with his stately step, ruminating much on the distribution of happiness among lairds and tenants.

I had been lecturing for some Sundays on the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, and had concluded a discourse on the true significance and peculiar form of the Song of Solomon, vindicating its place in the canon of Scripture as a true love-poem with a lofty moral in it. An elderly married woman, somewhat surprised at the change from the traditional exegesis, went home and spoke of it to a neighbour. "Do ye ken, hinnie, that Sang o' Solomon is nae what we thocht it: it's a rael love sang wi' a bonnie meanin'." She told me afterward, when I was visiting in that district, how she had been trying to explain it to her husband but failed to get him to take it in. "I tell't John when I cam' hame, an' he garred me read it till him; but he sune said, 'I dinna care muckle for a' yon tents o' Kedar and curtains o' Solomon. I wad suner hae ma ain thackit hoose, and snod box-bed.' That was a' John wad sae. John's been a gude joe tae me; but ye see, sir, there's nae poetry about John. He thinks naether o' roses nor lilies, nor curtains, but juist aboot cattle and pigs and horses, ye ken. The Sang o' Solomon wasna meant for the like o' John."

A shrewd old Scotch mason, much annoyed by the frost and snow that had stopped his work, was one Sunday reading the Book of Job. On coming to the passage which says, "Hast thou entered the treasures of the snow, or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?" he exclaimed in a tone of angry remonstrance, "Ay, Job, my man, nae doot it was a treasure tae you in your warm countrie to see the cauldriif sna';

but had you been a puir stane mason i' the North o' Scotland, you wad hae bin a wiser man an' said nae sic thing. There's nae treasure i' the snaw, naethin' but cauld feet and loss o' waages."

A poor farm servant, who worked hard on the fields, was in extreme grief, owing to the loss of his excellent wife who died in child-bed. They were a very loving couple and had gone through many hardships in a fine Christian spirit. In deep despondency the lonely husband, with his horse and cart, was passing homewards out of the town at a point where the town's dust-carts empty ashes and refuse. A sheet of paper blown from the heap was lying on the road, and he stooped and took it up. It was a leaf of some old family Bible in large print, and contained the verse, "Be careful for nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." He told me that no sermon ever so reached his heart. "I never gang by that place still," said he, "on the Whin Hill o' Banff, but I thank God for giein' me sic a word frae Himsel' through that aul' sheet o' the big Bible. It wasna blawn there without a purpose."

The teaching of the Shorter Catechism in the old parish schools was, as a rule, accompanied by careful exposition of the meaning of the language; but many idle lads were content to get the words by rote, and remained regardless of the meaning. It may seem incredible; yet I was told by a respectable old farmer that he never understood the answer to the famous first question, What is man's chief end? until he was lying on what he then thought was his death-



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bed, when all at once the meaning of the answer flashed into his mind and its fullness and depth grew as he pondered it. "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." A ship captain told a similar experience. The ship was wrecked on the coast of Denmark. The crew took to the boat and struck out for the shore with not much hope of reaching it. The captain could recall no text of Scripture to repeat to his despondent men except this same question and answer. This he repeated aloud once and again, when the meaning of the words instantly and for the first time dawned on his mind, and opened up to him the grand purpose of life. From that time he became a changed man.

There is much ignorance concerning many of the phrases used by clergymen in Scotland in their public intercessions. The story is told in Montrose of a minister who in his petitions frequently prayed that the work of *Antichrist* might be brought to an end. But the French Revolution occurring, the old dislike to Popery gave way to a new horror of the infidelity and cruelty connected with that event; and intercessions now were offered for the protection of the Altar and the Throne. This change puzzled an old woman, who, meeting the minister, said, "Sir, I wad like to speir something at ye, an' ye maunna tak' it ill." He assured her he would not be offended; and she rejoined, "Then, sir, is yon Annie Christie that ye prayed sae lang for deid? or is she better, for I niver hear ye speak about her noo."

As an instance of originality in the interpretation of Scripture I give the following. The husband was a crofter in an Aberdeenshire parish. It happened that the parish minister was lecturing on Daniel, and that he read the story of Nebuchadnezzar's image

with the head of gold, the arms of silver, the feet iron and the toes clay. The wife asked the husband, "Fat could yon image be?" The husband replied, "I dinna ken, but weel do I ken some fowk nae onlike it; fine heids, but puir at wark; wi' a grand eddication, but feet only iron when it comes to rinnin' to help onybody; lazy cratures, iron feet and clay taes." "Weel, John," said the wife, "that's winnerfu'; ye sud ha' been a minister yersel', John; I never thocht o't afore."

Another interpretation of Scripture greatly interested me. A young bride and bridegroom were kirked in Banff. Without thinking of them, I happened to preach upon the text, "If the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" They went home, and the young bride said lovingly, "I dinna ken if the minister meant to hint at us, but if he did I'm sure he meant weel. So a' throw the sermon I thocht this—Ye'll be the sawt, and I'll be the savour, Jeems, and syne naething will gang wrang." Jeems assented, and thought the sermon very applicable. Next week I got the interpretation from the wife, and did not venture to dispute the appropriateness of it.

Some twenty-five years ago there lived one of the most saintly souls I ever met. She had been engaged before that time for many years to deliver letters in a certain district in the parish of Gamrie within a circuit of some three miles. Left a widow, she had been able, on the small weekly pay she got as 'postie' to educate her family and live an honest and exemplary life. She told me that in her daily rounds she always got in the morning a "message to somebody." She liked to carry a small New Testament in her post-bag, and every now and then she

would get a verse on which to feed her mind and enrich her thought. It was on her retirement from this work to the county town that I came to know her; and her wonderful knowledge of the Bible and original way of saying things astonished me. Looking out at her back window, one sunny March day, she pointed with glee to the opening daisies in the field, and said, "I like the daisies best o' a' for they never dee. I dinna wonder Robbie (Burns) liket them sae weel." I quoted Montgomerie's line :

"The rose may have a summer's reign,  
The daisy never dies,"

and said she had hit upon a poetic thought. She seemed astonished and said, "Weel, poetry's jist what a'boddy thocht till somebody said it. That's the reason why Robbie's a'boddy's body." It was Pascal's saying, rendered in Scotch, that the best books are those which each man thinks he could himself have written.

When the end came near, she spoke of it with much satisfaction. "I've nae wish tae live ower lang. It wad be an awfu' calamity if we had to live tae the age o' Enoch or Methuselah. I'm sune gaun where we'll a' be young again, and ma best freens will be waitin' for me. A' the best we ever thocht o' will yet come true." It was her Scotch way of affirming that our highest ideals shall one day be realised.

Her terse expressions and marvellous ways of saying *multum in parvo* were probably acquired by her reading almost nothing but the Bible. As when she said, "Some fowks are never happy wi' their conscience; but I'm never happy withoot mine. I aye maun hae ma conscience upon my side." Another

saying of hers I noted down, "My Bible brings me the best company. It has a salve for a' ma sairs. And it tak's the richt measure o' yer fit. It lets ye neither craw nor croak" (forbids both boasting and grumbling).

One of her familiar sayings was, "A man has nae mair gweeds than he gets gweed o'." She considered this a proverb, and in some parts of Scotland I believe it is proverbial. She would illustrate it by the lives of crofters she knew, some of whom were very penurious. In her daily postal visits she would repeat the words "Pennies weel spent are better than pennies ill spared. When spring comes the seed's better in the grund than in the laft, and will gie ye mair return."

One of her strongest sayings was, "Folk will tak' mair trouble to be lost than to be saved. I see some neebours gaun to heaven as slow and as easy as they can. And I see ithers drivin' ower hedge and ditch to get to destruction. They need nae lantern to light their road."

Hers was the most radiantly happy home in my parish. Whenever a dark cloud came over the sky, I invariably went off to her humble cottage. It looked out upon the distant parish where she had been 'postie.' Whatever the weather without might be, there was sunshine within. "I live in the licht the hail day," she would say. "My sun never sets. It's lang since the days o' my mournin' were ended, and I'm nae to begin again."

The good sense and the high spiritual levels of the life of my dear old friend were in fine contrast with the superstitions of her time. For, a hundred years ago, when she was young, human life from birth to funeral, in the north of Scotland, was pervaded by

superstitious beliefs. They made life sad and filled it with perpetual fears. A den to the west of Banff was a haunt of fairies and brownies for long. With the growth of education the elves ceased to hold their trysts, and the goodman's croft vanished from the farm. But it is not many years ago since the minister of Seafield parish told me that one of his members affirmed that she had seen her dead neighbour's wraith flit round the gable of the house where the corpse lay. And I remember in 1860 a story of witches being seen at Hallowe'en surrounding a house, at the Glithno in Fetteresso parish, and frightening all the farm people. Thirty years ago nearly every crofter's house in Banffshire had still a rowan tree growing at its gable—a remnant of the old belief that it warded the cattle from blight and the family from witchcraft. It was not very long ago that I saw all the windows opened the moment that a death took place and the plate of salt placed upon the breast of the confined body, while two friends were chosen to sit up each night to keep away evil spirits. My aged friend had lived through all these superstitions, and her attainment to such a lofty type of spiritual life was all the more remarkable.

Of Robert Burns she was fond ; the dialect appealed to her Scottish tongue, and his pithy sayings were often on her lips. "Ye ken, I'm sair pleased wi' the 'Cottar's Saturday Nicht,' and that bonnie line about the haelsoome parritch, chief of Scotia's food. Weel do I like my parritch and my Bible ilka mornin'. I've aye a plate o' the ane and a portion o' the ither, gweed food and nae pooshin' (poison) mixt wi't." Connected with this thought was another saying of hers. "I like that verse that speaks about the hael-some words o' the Lord Jesus Christ. I've often

thocht that's the best proof o' the truth o' God's Word; it's words are richt haelsome. They are baith sawt and licht."

The Shorter Catechism she also knew well, and often drew upon it in her talk. "As the carritches says, 'We receive, and we rest upon Him alone'; some folks receive, but they canna rest. It's lang since I foond oot we maun dae baith, or else we hae nae lastin' peace." And again, "I like the Word, the simple word by itsel'; it's grand and strong. But I dinna forget my carritches: 'We maun atten' till't wi' diligence, preparation, and prayer, lay't up in oor herts and practeese it in oor lives.'"

She astonished me by the record she kept of answers to prayer. "I say my mornin' prayers, and a' the day, like Dauvid, I look up for answers. Sometimes they're lang o' comin', and nae aye in my wye, ye ken (with a merry twinkle). But sometimes it's just the auld word, 'While they are speaking, I will hear,' and my nervousness leeves me, and the clood gangs aff the sun, and I see His face the haill day." This was said in one of my most remembered visits to her humble home.

On another occasion, near the end, "I dinna ken muckle about grammar," she remarked, "but I never forget what ye said yon day aboot the present tenses and livin' in them. I tak' ilka promise noo in the present tense. His grace is sufficient, this verra day. I've begun, as the auld prophet says, to possess ma possessions." That talk was as good to me as many commentaries on the Old Testament, and sent me straight to Obadiah.

The last recorded conversation in my note-book was shortly before the end came. "This auld body o' mine's gettin' gye bent. It's lang since it was at

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its best, and I've been comin' doon the hill for forty years ; but a' the time I've been gaun up the hill  
The day's comin' when this body will be nae main  
eese (use), and I'll throw't aff, just like the wee bit  
chickennies leavin' their shells."

